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The Baptistery,

OR

THE WAY OF ETERNAL LIFE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE CATHEDRAL."

Isaac Williams

OXFORD,

JOHN HENRY PARKER:

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ADVERTISEMENT.

These Illustrations, which bear evident marks of great thought and genius, are by Boetius a Bolswert, and are found in an old Latin work called "Via Vitæ Æternæ." They gave rise to the reflections in verse, in the same way that those of Herman Hugo seem to have suggested Quarles's Emblems. Great care has been taken to omit every thing which our Church might disapprove; but it is possible that in such a multiplicity of objects one or two such, here and there, may have escaped notice.

Vitum
Virtus

The Frontispiece.

How art Thou seen in Heaven, O living Well,
The Fount of our New-Birth,—the blessed seal
Of our inheritance? O who can tell
How countless Angels may around Thee kneel,
While earth-born clouds their glorious forms conceal,
And hide the golden vision from our view?
Our God and Father Faith doth here reveal,
Whose radiance lights up the Baptismal dew,
While we emerge in life where all things are made new.

Countless as broods that fill the teeming sea,
On generations generations pour
As through the mouth of Ocean, flowing free
Into the world through that Baptismal door:
Numbers innumerable, evermore,
Part on each side in endless destinies,
Some on advancing to light's blissful shore,
Some on the road where sorrow never dies,
Each as they choose their lot, the way before them lies.

Haply to earth-dimm'd eyes alike they seem ;—
These worldly Favour courts with winning smiles,
And Pleasure lures with many a lightsome scheme,
Hope after hope their thoughtless way beguiles ;
That foul-limb'd Monster, conscious of her wiles,
Sits o'er the arch and counts them for her own :
While Virtue shews the path where nought defiles,
And her meek children 'neath her solemn throne
Walk on their silent way, sad, desolate, alone.

On, step by step, they tread their way with fear,
And down-bent looks ; and as they onward pass
Grief's penitential robes they seem to wear :
Eying herself within a silent glass
Faith calmly moves, and from the worldly mass
Parts more and more, where Virtue's palmy rod
Points out the way ; and like the withering grass
The things of earth beneath her feet are trod,
While on their narrow way they upward walk with God.

Then light increases to the perfect day ;
The world doth know them not, and cannot know,
Nor understand their ways, nor see the ray
That comes from Heaven to light them, while they go
From strength to strength ; along this vale of woe
A rainbow sprung from the Baptismal well
Surrounds them, raining freshness o'er their brow ;
And Angels while they know not round them dwell,
Whence in their presence seems some Heaven-constraining spell.

Lo, one by one they pass, and are no more,
Walking in awful stillness into light

Too pure for mortal wisdom to explore ;
So solemnly and still they pass from sight ;—
Still as the minute-watches of the night,
Or trees that by the streams of life appear,
Waiting their change : O vision all too bright
For sinful man, who still must walk in fear,
Till death removes the veil and makes the vision clear.

PREFATORY THOUGHTS.

A DIALOGUE.

A.—The Church with her deep mysteries and rites
Portray'd in semblance of Cathedral aisles,
With pillar'd shades of stone, and cloistral walks,
Deadens and stiffens our expansive thoughts
Of her ethereal essence, casing them
In dead cold marble; every finite form
That would set forth a nature infinite
Must circumscribe it.

B.— Yes, in that design
Your argument was straiten'd to that mould,
But so the Church is oft disclos'd to man,
As a material Temple wrought of stones:
Yet often as a glorious living Form.

A.—Then might we not in verse delineate
A vision of the Bride invisible,
In Heavenly grace and beauty warm with life,
With Saints and Angels peopling all her courts?
The secret struggles of the pilgrim soul,

And accidents that throng this mortal course
Oft Holy Writ reveals as living things,—
Spirits of good and evil. Angel forms
Tend on the cradle and the tomb of Christ,
And at His Judgment-seat come forth to view.

B.—Such a device seems of a scope too vast,
Of nature too ethereal to embrace,
In mould and language of poetic thought.

A.—The portraitures in these old cloistral books
Have bodied forth to meet the eye of sense
Stores of divinest wisdom: these might range
To aid our new conception, and thus wed
Painting with poesy; and haply stand
As storied walls of a Baptismal cell,
Or bring around a mimic theatre,
Shifting the sceneries of pictur'd life,
And shew as in a mirror things of Heaven.

B.—You scarce could weed from out this varied field
(Which seems a wilderness of type and thought)
Emblems of Roman worship, but therein
The microscopic eye of fear or hate
Would spy some poisonous herb, and thence would arm
Her venom'd barbs against you.

A.— Such vain talk
I heed not,—taking all religious care
That naught be left that bears the taint of ill
To injure blameless souls; for much I fear
That e'en the tokens of her piety,
The rosary, the amice, cowl, and veil,

Are so allied with evil, that they seem
As deeply steep'd in some enchanter's well,
And not in Holy Baptism. What forbids
But e'en from shades where baneful weeds lie hid,
I still may gather flowers, and bid them grow
In the home vineyard of our mother Church?
These symbols have I gaz'd on long and oft,
Threading their morals and their mysteries,
And thence beguil'd to deeper—holier thoughts.
And surely heart-expanding Charity,
If aught she finds that ministers to good,
To others would like instruments supply.
These scenes are eloquent beyond all words,
For objects pleading through the visual sense
Are stronger than discourses to the ear,
More powerfully they reach and move the soul.

B.—But grant no sign of Rome in these appears;—
Yet these appeals to the more sensual eye
Do savour of her worship, in her courts
Imagination holds too high a place,
Leagu'd with material things, and charms the heart
Prone to idolatry, unconscious glides
To sense from spirit: upward to ascend
Is hard; it is on earth to live in Heaven.

A.—Yes, dangers on each side beset our road;
When zeal, imbued with puritanic leaven,
Clogs up heart-easing Heaven-born poesy,
The soul thus stifled breeds dark mutinies,
Irreverence, irreligion, hollow words,

Hypocrisies: yet on the other side
Let loose it runs on to material things,
And blends with sensuous idolatry.
The Church, 'tis thought, is wakening through the land,
And seeking vent for the o'erloaded hearts
Which she has kindled,—pours her forth anew,—
Breathes life in ancient worship,—from their graves
Summons the slumbering Arts to wait on her,
Music and Architecture, varied forms
Of Painting, Sculpture, and of Poetry;
These are allied to sense, but soul and sense
Must both alike find wing and rise to Heaven;
Both soul and body took the Son of man,
Both soul and body must in Him serve God.

B.—If lowliness of heart and reverend faith
Be with us, we through these conflicting tides
May reach our Heavenly haven: if these guides
Be wanting we alike shall fail at last,
Whether we stretch our canvass to the gale,
Or creep along the shore: yet in these days
I would hold back and fear. There are, 'tis said
Spirits abroad impatient of our Church,
Her weakness and her children's, which is great,
Or driven by harshness to unfilial thoughts,
And yearn for union with intruding Rome.

A.—This union in His Church is God's own gift,
Not to be seiz'd by man's rude sinful hands,
But the bright crown of mutual holiness.
Therefore such leanings find in me no place,

So broad I feel the gulf 'twixt her and us,
Form'd by her dark and sad idolatries,
That I would rather die a thousand deaths
Than pass it: sure I cannot others lead
To thoughts which foreign are to all I love,
And find in me no sympathetic chord.
Then may I not unfold my parable
In visions such as holy Hermas taught,
Seeking the warm light of antiquity,
The Gospel's glorious morn, and the first love
Of the immortal Spouse? Let us the while
In these most perilous and restless days
Cling the more close to our maternal Church
As to a guardian Angel—hold her hand—
With her rove haunts of hoar antiquity,
To which she leads and marshals us the way
As to our true and sacred heritage,—
And thus pursue her principles and powers
Develop'd from her shrines and Liturgies,
Covering her faults, supplying her defects;
Such filial loyalty I deem our light,
Our strength, and our protection; such a guide
I need, and uncomplaining watch her light,
Like the dim moon given to our wintry clime.
The duteous child compares not, questions not.
This sacred Art, which through the thoughtful eyes
Holds converse with the heart, she pleas'd allows
It by her holy altar finds a place,
Peoples th' enamel'd windows, pours its stores

O'er shrines, o'er sculptur'd floors, o'er pictur'd panes,
Riches of sacred scene and character—
Spirits and things of spirit brings to sense,—
With rude accoutrements of uncouth shape,—
Or female forms of Virtue[a]*, and full oft*
Delineations of the Judgment-day[b]*.*
E'en so the sister Art that speaks in stone
Cleaves o'er her fonts, like ivy, spreading round
Their shafts and sides with sacred imagery,
And scatters o'er them marble eloquence.
Therefore I deem these pictured sceneries,
Which, like sweet music heard in rural haunts,
Would interweave the forms of sight with song—
Breathe with no spirit alien to our Church,
Nor uncongenial to that character
That in her voice and form and motion speaks.

B.—All this I doubt not; and the uncouth shapes,
Harsh-featured oft and quaint and rude of limb,
Wherein her stores of wisdom she retains,
Are hallow'd by severe antiquity.
But who with modern lessons such would blend?
And look you here; now these are fearful sights,
Monstrous, ill-shaped, and gaunt, and terrible,
From which this gentle Age with lifted hands
Will turn, and 'gainst thy volume close the door.

A.—This Age needs them the more. Self-loving Times,—

[a] *e. g.* on the west window of New College Chapel, as in Image XVIII.

[b] *e. g.* on the west window at Magdalene College Chapel, as in Image XXII.

Which fain would from religion crop the flower
And leave the thorns behind,—require the more,
That we should not omit that bitter part
Which in each healthful chalice blends below.

B.— *Yes, if design could match the dreadful theme,*
And execution match design : yet here
There is put forth no breathing eloquence,
No stern embodying of inspirèd thought,
Which could it meet the thoughtful gaze of men
Would fill the eyes with tears, the breath with sighs,
Like rain and winds upon the stagnant lake,
And so amend the heart.

A.— *Such eloquence*
Each to himself must minister ; and oft
Doubtless a heart, yearning for things of Heaven,
Hath fed on storied walls o'er cottage hearth,
And rude embroideries of quaint device,
Which Taste would mock at. Pure religious care
Would strive to wed performance with design,
Till both give birth to heart-ennobling thought,
Full of high adoration. Yet ne'er yet
Could warmest rhetoric of high discourse,
Nor earnest fear with gravest eloquence,
So form the picture e'en of that dread Day,
But while meek spirits tremble, others scoff
Or cavil, or at phrase or doctrine carp,
Bringing God's herald to their judgment-seat,
And not themselves before the throne of God.
One well we know hath given such utterance

To the deep flood of his own fervent thoughts,
That seem'd to us some stream of Paradise
Flowing o'er Eden's gems of golden thought,
Troubled indeed, and strong, and passionate,
But such as flowed from 'neath the throne of God—
Of Judgment and of Baptism and of Sin.
And when our hearts in trembling silence long
Stored deep his words, and were bowed down to earth,
Nor wish'd to be uplifted;—then we found
'Twas the light theme of after-dinner talk,
Chance meetings by the way, debate, and strife,
And controversial whisperings;—tender souls
So pitiful forsooth, and full of care
Lest that their brethren's spirits be cast down
By theme so terrible, and over-wrought!
Alas, in them no fear of such despair!

B.—I grant it; yet I doubt if these rude shapes
Are themes of wholesome terror; haply such
Might be envelop'd in the cloud and shade,
Or set in outline; such thus dimly seen
Are oft more eloquent; the mind supplies
Its own Diviner language, and fills up
The picture: Painting it is said hath less,
The statue more of breathing poesy.

A.—Yes, for strong passion oft when left half-told
Breathes inspiration and true eloquence,
Far more than many words: and it were well
If thus our limner could portray these shapes,
That they should stand reveal'd in outline dim,

More statue-like, more full of poetry ;—
Or half-withdraw from sight, and clothe in shade,
For night and darkness is their fit abode.
And thus in Holy Writ such vision comes,
With spirits, where the stars are gleaming through
Their bodiless and pure ethereal forms.
But if Sin puts on shape to meet the eye,
These hideous forms, or foul deformities,
Most meetly speak her qualities and frame ;
For such is Sin in God's creation fair,
Foul treason 'gainst the Majesty of Heaven,
Against all goodness, beauty, harmony ;
Monsters, dark creeping things, and hideous snakes
In nature are the types which speak her forms.
And sure much harmful influence is wrought,
By those proud spirits of the later age
Who throw heroic grandeur o'er the shape
Of the Arch-Evil One,—in dread sublime
Throning him, as that bard we may admire
But cannot love.

B.— *Still some, as well you know,*
Esteem'd for wisdom among those we love,
Shrink from this language to the eye displayed,
And cannot but disprove.

A.— *This thought full long*
Shook my strong purpose, much creating doubt ;
But now no more, by judgments strong outweigh'd
And sacred reasonings. Minds of various men
Are variously attemper'd ; in the soul

There is an eye and ear, as in the frame,
Attun'd or not attun'd to harmonies;
Some more than others catch responding notes
Of sound or language. Some from tongue and pen
Banish all figure, comprehend it not:
Others read wisdom through similitudes,
Through medium of external sign and form,
Their speech by nature rich with images.
And this, if I with reverence so may speak,
Is God's own language: yea, that Eastern tongue
Which He hath chosen to converse with man
Is form'd of symbols. Is not all His world
And all His word one speaking parable,
Speaking to sense of things invisible?
All things with Him are double, each event
Doth throw its shadow forward; all His word
Is a full store of countless images,
Who knows them best is most Divinely wise.

B.—Those figures are of God, but yours of man.
Yet grant such is God's teaching; still, methinks,
Should we enshrine these forms uncouth and strange
In spiritual temples of the inner mind,
We should do wrong to pure immortal Truth,
Blending it with such semblance mean and poor.

A.—All earthly things are poor to speak Divine:
For what are types that set forth things of God,
Moses to Jesus, or the Ark to Heaven?
What is the ruin which on Sodom rains,
Or armies compassing lost Sion's walls,

To that great dooms-day which they harbinger?
Poor shadows all of dread reality.
Language suggests, the feeding eye receives,
And healthful minds convert to aliment,
Th' unhealthy turn to bane: hence sickly souls,
And those replenish'd with immortal bloom.
A graver question haunts me—

B.— *Should a child*
Drink in these lessons with a greedy eye,
And in the dreadful stillness of dead night
Cry out,—of fearful forms and eyes uncouth
That fright his slumbers:—

A.— *You have truly touch'd*
But clothed in fairer utterance the thought
That moves me;—better far that Ocean's depths
Should overwhelm our pictured themes, than we
Offend Christ's little ones: yet much I doubt
If objects that affright the tender mind
Make it to fall, nay sometimes cause to stand,
And nothing here I trust may find a shape
That so should terrify;—for I prefer
Judgments of Childhood to the worldly wise
As less by bias sway'd.

B.— *Well, if so be*
The test is easy, here Mercutio comes
Along th' embowering walk, where evening shades
Fall, and the purple clouds are trooping by.

A.—Him would I make my judge.

B.— You have in him
Both judge and advocate;—for all these things
Partake of those wild tales which Childhood loves,
Of haunted castles and enchanted lore.
Who has not conn'd, and with Aladdin's lamp
Wander'd through tales of Araby, and scenes
Of watery realms conceal'd beneath the sea,
Beauteously terrible; or Spenser's world
Of sword and spear ethereal? These methinks
Touch Childhood as akin to the unseen,
The infinite and wild that speak of Heaven,—
The image hid in chambers of the heart
Which pants for the ideal, in a soul
Fresh from the hands of God: but here he comes.
A.—Mercutio, you and I these pictured scenes
Have often traced together, and have touch'd
On deep grave themes, until we pass'd to thoughts
That left us musing and in better worlds,
With such a winning interest that seem'd
To set your sports behind, and for awhile
Left you more thoughtful:—think you this design
Is such as would affright you, or create
Visions of fear? have ever such remain'd
Sleeping or sleepless hanging on your thoughts,
And our discourse appear'd to rise in dreams
Making night terrible? See this dread scene
The Day of final doom.
M—. I think that these
Might issue from the limner's hand, so wrought

As not to terrify: no more than sights
In Gothic aisles and old Cathedrals dim,
Which sickness might invest with her own hues
Of terror,—no more than at dead of night
When Contemplation summons up the theme
Of the great Judgment. Words of Holy Writ,—
Of the undying worm and place of fire—
Will oft stand forth with power unknown before,
When night and darkness bring the unseen near.

A.—How fraught with grave instruction is this scene!
How eloquent! how full of warning thought[c]*!*
Look here, this is the great Archangel's trump
Which Scripture speaks of; and observe that here
The centre and circumference is this,
That all hearts shall be open'd;—and this mark,
'Tis made throughout to hang on this alone,
Whether we have loved God, or have loved self:
These are the mirrors wherein souls are seen,
These are the books; on this the scale depends;
This is announc'd to the Eternal years:
See, Virtue looks alone upon this love.
And these now pass unharm'd into the Sun
Of Glory: here note the designer's skill
To mark the King and Queen when crownless now,—
They issue from deep-rended monuments,
Which bear the stamp of ancient Royalties.

M.—And are they blessed? we would have them so,
Kings have been Martyrs.

[c] See Judgment scene, Image XXII.

A.— It would seem that these
Arise too late, the blessed now are gone,
"The dead in Christ rise first." The painter means
Christ's kingdom is the poors'. And here is one
Torn from the blessed, and who bids his friends
A long farewell! But let us dwell no more
On the dread scene;—we now have power to choose.
M.—Sure these must reach the heart; and oftentimes
When I pursued them step by step with you,
I seem'd to drink in sermons full of thought.
They differ from th' enchanted tales in this,
Those terrify but soothe not; these of yours
Of terror yet of sure protection speak:
These terrors are but wholesome thoughts of crime,
These enemies are sins,—the shield is God.
A.—Yes, children here are wiser than ourselves:
Imagination wakes in a new world
Replete with wonders to the childish soul;
And ere it yet has known the sting of guilt,
It needs to learn that serpents lie in flowers,
That evil spirits hide as well as good
In this fair wilderness wherein they wake.
Now to resume the theme of our discourse:—
I should be loath to let this awful Work
(Bereft of all that pains self-pleasing minds)
Like a bright-speckled serpent crawl along
Reft of its sting, to please a gaping show:
As God hath given them stings let us adore
The awful emblem, nor in God's great world

Wish adders baneless : but by graver thought
Gather sweet honey from the stinging bees ;
And adder's oil 'tis said will heal its wounds.
So we from such may gain a holy fear
And high philosophy. 'Tis such a theme
Which frets the world and arms its slanderous tongues
Deep steep'd in poisonous hate ; 'tis this which goads
The loud disputers of God's word and will,
'Gainst self-renouncing bearers of the Cross,
Wherever found, or such as seem to be.
Such hate I deem the shadow of God's truth,
And without which the substance cannot stand,
Nor bathe its steps in sunshine of true Light,
The shadow which ne'er left the Lord of Truth,
Inseparable as night attending Day,
Whene'er the light of God doth fall on man.
Yet they who seek for safety, not for ease,—
Who seek to know themselves,—such awful theme
Will ponder. Here to fix the heart and eyes
Will heal the sores of controversial strife,
Straiten our wills, our motives purify,
Humble our hearts, make single-eyed to see,
And single-hearted to embrace the truth.
Thus to behold the pregnant thunder-cloud,
Bound with the rainbow which surrounds the Judge,
Shall bid God's children hasten 'neath the roof
Of His own sheltering House, and there await
Its coming on with tender offices,
Each emulous his brother to befriend,

Each to forget himself; such have no ear
For controversial triflings and debate,
Naught that responds within to party strife.
Then I would not my little bark should sail
To summer suns without that dreadful freight,
Nor Baptism's storied walls omit such scenes
However poor portray'd;—set forth to view
With feeble eloquence, yet such as might
Arrest one glance,—one thought, which entering in
The door of the life-kindling—shaping soul,
May haply there lie hid, yet something blend
Of reverend thought with other lighter themes;
May to the fount of action entrance find,
That streams which issue thence may bear the tinge
Of fear, and dread expectance of that morn.
Reader and writer on that morn must meet:—
Thrice happy, could this theme arouse but one
To hide his brow on his uplifted hand,
Recalling his past life in silent prayer.

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PART I.

The Baptistery.

There is a Font[a] within whose burnish'd face
The o'erarching pile itself reflected sleeps,
Columns, arch, roof, and all the hallow'd place,
Beauteously mirror'd in its marble deeps;
And holy Church within her vigil keeps;—
Thus round our Font on storied walls arise
Scenes that encompass Sion's holy steeps,
Rivers of God, and sweet societies,
The mountain of our rest, and Kingdom of the skies.

Uncouth as pictur'd scenes, full often found
To blend with our first childhood's sweetest thought,
Quaint tablets rang'd some antique hearth around,
Blue Holland porcelain, all rudely wrought
Yet fair in childhood's eyes, and richly fraught
With character and scene of sacred lore:
And haply from such sights hath childhood bought
Her holiest wisdom, such as evermore
Mingle with manhood's soul, and colour fancy's store.

[a] At the Church of St. Ouen, at Rouen.

Thus on the sides of our Baptismal cell
Are rang'd the varied scenes of our new birth,
And round our household hearth in vision dwell,
Weigh'd in the scale of their immortal worth;
As Angels may behold the things of earth.
They at the shapes of vice with horror start;—
And while to man appears but noisy mirth,
They see the struggles of the silent heart,
And gates of Heaven and Hell opening to bear their part.

From sights and sounds of Day's too glaring light,
Thither shall Faith retire: this solemn gloom
Shall bring the starry choirs of Heaven to sight,
And shut out worldly thoughts; while in their room,
In this still twilight, silent as the tomb,
Shall come the shapes of holy Heaven, and hence
As moonlight gleams their lineaments illume,
Beckon us on with ghostly eloquence,
In shapes half hid in shade, and half reveal'd to sense.

Now fair unearthly forms obscurely gleam,
Now scenes of pilgrimage come forth to view,
And living semblances, as in a dream
Appear, and vanish, and appear anew
In varied combination, now pursue,
Now follow—some with buoyant wings, and arms
Celestial; beings whose effects we rue,
Come dismally to form in stern alarms,
Lying in wait for souls, and bent on mortal harms.

Thus in the shadowy night when mortals sleep,
And things most real with unreal blend,
Heavenly with earthly, phantoms walk and weep,
Yet bear divine significance, and end
In holy truth: where'er our footsteps wend
Come forms of eloquence from earth and sky,
Pour'd on the scene the pilgrim to befriend,—
To them who travel to the realms on high,
All things are given to speak divine philosophy.

From parable, or type, or living scene,
Come speaking forms to people our blest well;
God's words and works are here responsive seen
As in a twofold mirror, both to tell
And speak the language of the Invisible:
When Wisdom to the soul gives ears to hear,
Nature becomes one living oracle,
Whose Sibyl leaves need no interpreter
But the understanding heart and the obedient ear.

Hour after hour, like some melodious chime,
Creation speaks Thee; when Thou giv'st to see
And read Thy lessons; things of flying time
Range themselves in their order while they flee
To form Thy language, and to speak of Thee.
Thou call'st them by their names, when through our night
Like stars on watch they answer Here we be,
And at Thy bidding give their cheerful light
To speak unto Thy sons of things beyond the sight.

This world is but Thy mirror, fram'd to teach
Thy children of the Truth behind the veil;
Love's handmaids charm with beauty, charming preach,
And preaching hurry by, bloom but to fail;
And all material things, so passing frail,
Are but her handmaids walking in disguise:
Upon their earthward side dark shades prevail,
But on the side beheld by Heaven-taught eyes,
There is a living light which their true Sun supplies.

The Sun, which here below doth life afford,
That lighteth all things, all things cherisheth,
Is but the shadow of that living Word;
The winds and air which are our vital breath
Speak Thy good Spirit, which to lose is death:
Baptismal dowers are seen in those bright dews,
Wherewith the Sun weaves Morn's illumin'd wreath,
And showers, streams, lakes, their fresh'ning life diffuse;—
And Ocean's mighty voice proclaims the glorious news.

Creation all is new where'er we look,
All things are touch'd by an unearthly hand,
And answering to the mirror of God's book,
Trees, rivers, birds, and stars, and sea, and land,
Are but one veil, and speaking one command;
Those are most real which we shadows deem,
In Fancy's visions Truth's stern figures stand,
Calling to Heaven, of Heavenly things their theme,
The earth in which we live appears the only dream.

We seem to rise upon it as a stair
Reaching to Heaven, whereon the Angels pass,
And we beguile ourselves with visions fair,
While from our feet, like some cloud-structur'd mass
Lit by bright rays or fragile looking-glass,
It vanishes. Such thoughts at solemn Eve,
Like moonlight shadows o'er the waving grass,
Come o'er us, and awhile we wake to grieve,
But soon such lessons stern our fickle spirits leave.

Men scarce discern the sound,—life's footsteps fall
So downy soft, 'mid scenes of care and crime,—
But still anon, at each calm interval,
A voice is heard among the wings of time
Speaking His praise; like some sweet solemn chime
Flung sweetly forth from some melodious tower,
With modulating bells of sacred rhyme,
Philosophy, from that her stony bower,
Singing in sadness sweet of life's fast waning hour.

I

IMAGE THE FIRST.

Consider, O man, thine end and thy ways.

Consider [A] as in the presence of God, for what end thou art created, [B] as if thine Heavenly Guide stood by thy side as thou art formed from the dust, and pointed out to thee thine everlasting home. Consider that the end is twofold, the one is that of happiness [C], the other of misery [D]. And into this latter the World is being rolled down [E]. It departeth into smoke, and is inflamed with a threefold concupiscence. And observe how it is ever tossed about as the sea [F], which causeth shipwrecks, and is full of shoals and rocks. Into that celestial Glory there is a threefold way that leadeth [G], by which is signified the threefold state of life; the life of religious retirement which is denoted by the direct way; that of the ecclesiastic by one which is less direct; and the secular by that which is winding and intricate. And this forsooth it is, inasmuch as it is of its own nature less adapted to the attainment of Christian perfection; although it full often happens that they who are in this latter state, do in piety far surpass those who live in the more perfect, rising up by the *steps* that lead into the straighter way. There is moreover another circumstance which is designated by the threefold path, the way of purification, which is that of beginners; the way of illumination, which is that of the more advanced; and that of union with God, which is the way of the perfect. Thou art moreover admonished that in every state, in every step, and in every action, there is a mode of life and practice which is threefold. Take care that in all things thou adherest to that course of conduct which is most simple and direct. Always in all things keep God before thine eyes [H]. And in every place draw near unto God in prayer, in one of these threefold characters [I], either as a criminal groaning over thine offences, or as one poor and in need of all virtue, or as the Bride burning with love. For these three persons serve to express the threefold spiritual condition. And thus approaching say, "Let my complaint come before Thee, O Lord, give me understanding according to Thy word[a]."

[a] Psalm cxix. 169.

The Choice of Life.

Sabbath of Sabbaths, never-waning rest,
Which God upon His chosen shall bestow,—
Art thou no dream where Hope hath built her nest
To cradle fond illusions; no vain show,
But the great dwelling of the eternal Now;
Veriest of truths, and sure reality,
To which all things are shadows here below;—
And there are they this portal pass to see
Thy mansion 'mid the clouds, immortal, stable, free.

And art thou mine own birthright, glorious place,
Which eye hath not beheld, nor fancy knows?
When we would paint thy thought-transcending face,
The purest height to which our wisdom goes,
Is but the mere negation of our woes;—
'Mid our contentions thou art gracious peace,
Unto the weary thou art calm repose,
To prisoners gall'd with chains thou art release,
And to the mourner thou a place where sorrows cease.

To wanderers toss'd on the tempestuous main,
Thou art beyond the storm a quiet shore;—
To heart-sick hopes a stay that shall sustain;—
To needy men thou art celestial store;—
To hearts bereav'd where friends shall part no more,
And love shall need no more the chast'ning rod;—
To penitents the land where sin is o'er;—
To virgin souls a floor by Angels trod;—
To saintly men a place where they shall see their God.

There are no evening shades,—no setting sun,—
There is no fall of the autumnal leaf,—
No age o'ertaking life but just begun,—
No gloom, and no decay, no parting grief;—
For joy below is nought but pain's relief,
Words that would speak it do but syllable
How poor it is, how shadowy, and brief.
O blessed place beside that living well,
Thou only know'st not that sad sweet word Farewell!

Isle of the evening skies, cloud-vision'd land,
Wherein the good meet in the Heavenly fold,
And drink of endless joy at God's right hand;
There kings and subjects meet, and young and old,
Pure virgins, matrons chaste, and martyrs bold,
Prophets, Apostles, Patriarchs, great and good,
Many yet one, in union manifold,
All who victorious in life's conflict stood,
And there that Holy One Who shed for me His blood.

Prayer shall e'en now unlock the azure door,
And there admit us to that company;
There Meekness worships as a suppliant poor,
There sin-bound Penitence doth bend the knee,
And there the holy Church doth sue to Thee.
All hast Thou given to us, all we desire,
Given Thine own self on the accursed tree,
And wash'd us with Thy blood:—we would aspire
To give ourselves to Thee, O kindle Thou the fire.

That fire shall in my breast burn all beside,
All that is earthly,—all of selfish love,
Projects of low-brow'd indolence and pride,
Until I feel in Thee I live and move,
And breathe regenerate life of them above:
For we are born of that celestial well,
And bear a charmèd life,—that we might prove
Meet inmates for that peopled citadel,
Where Angels pure from sin, or sin-wash'd spirits dwell.

How hast Thou set around me every good,
That it might lead me to Thee; yea in all
It is Thyself that hast around me stood,
In all I hear Thee speak, I hear Thy call
Bidding me come to Thee, a Father's hall;—
To walk the waves to Thee amid the gloom;
O hold me by Thy hand, for if I fall
I fall for ever—unto Thee I come,
Thou art Thyself alone our everlasting home.

Thou art Thyself alone the living Way,
Which in our darkness grows more manifest,
And brightens into Thee the perfect Day;
O lead a wandering exile to Thy breast,
O let a troubled heart in Thee find rest!
Thou didst behold me ere I yet was born;
My infant cries were unto Thee addrest,
And taught by Thee: Thy rays did then adorn
A dewdrop in the light of never-ending morn.

A trembling mote upborne in boundless space,—
An atom in the shoreless infinite,—
A sand that in the whirlwind finds its place,—
A drop within a sea of endless might,—
A point in the great void of depth and height;—
Here in the womb of time Thou schoolest me,
By seasons, and returns of day and night,
To bear the vision of eternity,
To be for ever one, or exiled aye from Thee.

I wake as Adam from the formless dust,
And ask—Why am I born? Thou bid'st me rise,
And standing by my side demand my trust,
Placed in Thy Church Thy better Paradise,
And to my longings point out happy skies,
Telling me all things here that please the sight
Are but the semblance given to feeble eyes,
Shadows of Heavenly rest and pure delight,
And fast they fade away, to warn us by their flight.

All that is fair when summer days decline,
All things without speak of Thine inner reign;
The gate of Eve, the youthful face divine,
The starry night, the Moons that fill and wane,
Like Thine own Church that wanes and fills again;
The stars like Abraham's seed set round in Heaven,
The birds like Angels in their blue domain,
And prowling beasts before the twilight driven,
Which tell of spirits bad that love the gloom of Even :—

All things speak of Thee,—every sun that shines
Sets forth Thine image, and each day's return
Is herald of the Morn that ne'er declines :—
The bright recovering year, at every turn
Speaks of that great New Year, where all things burn
In glorious beauty round the Source of Light;
All are Thy teachers,—grant us to discern
Their Heavenly lessons,—cleanse our mortal sight,
We have enough to preach, did we but hear aright.

Shew me the way that leadeth unto Thee,
Though it be difficult Thou art all might,
Though low Thou art of love a boundless sea,
Though dark Thou art Thyself the living Light,
Though toilsome Thou art goodness infinite,
And wilt refresh the heavy-laden soul
That comes to Thee ;—guide me to Thee aright,
I cannot come unless Thou dost control;
Lead Thou, enlighten, draw, and fill my being whole.

May I be lost in Thy great Majesty,
Myself no more, to have no cherish'd thing,
No choice, no hope, no sorrow, but in Thee,
My Shepherd, and my Father, and my King:
Nothing is good but what in Thee doth spring,
Nothing is good but what in Thee doth end;
O let me hear Thy voice, let all things bring
Thy voice to me; whatever Thou dost send,
Shall be my welcome guest, shall be my honour'd friend.

Whate'er I have is Thine; my hour of death,
And all the days of life are in Thine hand,
My endless portion hangs upon Thy breath,
My hairs by Thee are number'd, and the sand
That forms beneath my feet the eternal strand:
Whate'er I know, whate'er I have is Thine,
Save sins, which hold me like a living band,
Which Thou alone canst make not to be mine;—
Number may count my sins, but not Thy loves divine.

Vain worldly hope, on waters without home
Toss'd and not comforted, and still at fits
Borne up and down upon the sparkling foam,
No haven knows, no anchor-hold admits;
From rock to rock the bird of evil flits,
Brightly extending her ill-omen'd wings;
And in thee at thy helm gaunt Ruin sits
Urging thee onward, while the Syren sings;
O keep me where on shore the Rock her shadow flings!

Thrice happy they, who as they draw more near
More clearly can discern their being's end,
Gird up their loins with hope, and year by year
Unto their stable home still steadier wend;
And from the sinuous road will still ascend
Unto the straiter path, while the calm ray
Lightens them step by step, nor even bend
Their firm resolve from that their steadfast way,
Until they are absorb'd in the Eternal Day.

Thrice happy they, who earthly stores have sold,
Dearer sublunar joys, domestic ties,
And form themselves into one holy fold
To imitate on earth the happy skies,
With vigil, prayer, and sacred litanies,
Their souls to Heavenly contemplation given,
While earthly hope within them buried lies,
Their sole employ to purge the evil leaven,
And render their cleans'd souls a fit abode for Heaven.

And happy they, though more of earth's alloy
Creeps in the scenes of their terrestrial state,
Who dwell 'mid social hearths and home employ,
Yet 'mid the world do at God's altar wait!
They too may live beside the Heavenly gate,
And give their fleeting hours to ceaseless prayer,
Beside the sad, the sick, the desolate;
Christ's poor their friends, His little ones their care,—
Their self-rewarding toil their brethren's toils to share.

Yea, Love may give thee wings by social hearth
Which shall outstrip the Heaven-girt anchorite,
And virgin choirs removed from scenes of earth;
Train thee 'mid crowded towns to pray aright,
To labour and withdraw from things of sight,
Till vanities around thy pathway prove
Spurs on thy road to Heaven, thy weakness might,
While step by step thy ways from earth remove,
To that straight path lit up by Everlasting Love.

Light are their steps, who in life's earliest dawn
The mountain-tops of Heavenly life ascend,
Brushing the dewdrops from the spangled lawn;
Nor ever from the straighter path descend,
Fixing their eyes upon their journey's end;
Sweetest best thoughts are theirs, such as have striven
With childhood, and with dawning conscience blend,
To flee all other love but that of Heaven,
Ere weigh'd to earth with sin and much to be forgiven.

II

Converti pedes meos in teste monia tua.
Ibunt de virtute in virtutem
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q

IMAGE THE SECOND.

Examine into thy defects, and do thy diligence to root out vice, and to plant the tree of virtue.

Take heed, O thou who studiest perfection, that thou dost often examine [A] thy conscience, and of it demand the account [B], as if in the presence of Christ the Judge [C]. Place before thine eyes the commandments of God [D], and thine own rules and resolutions [E]. Behold how the demon accuseth thee [F], and how little good [G] thou hast done. Trample Sin under thy feet [H], and see how thou mayest avoid it. It is no other than that foul Monster which hath the head of the peacock, the belly of the dropsical, the feet of the goat, the tail of the scorpion. By the peacock is denoted the pride of life, avarice by the dropsy, lustful concupiscence by the feet of the goat; by the tail of the scorpion the poison of sin is signified, and by the skull its wages, which are death. And now, by a holy and firm resolution of mind, cut down the Tree of sin, [I] whose fruit is death; and plant within thee some new Virtue [K]. Then take thou the armour of the Spirit, and oppose [L] with peculiar examination and care the Vice which most besets thee [M]. And such is that which chiefly and more immediately retards thee in the keeping of the Ten Commandments [N], or of thine own rules and resolutions [O], that is to say, in the way of God. Watch thou for every Occasion [P] of victory, and observe that the first step in a holy life is the most difficult, the second is more easy, and the third the most easy: for Virtue herself [Q] shall come down to aid thee, as thou advancest on the way to Heaven.

Childhood at Self-examination.

Ere sin hath brush'd away the morning bloom,
How great the care to holy Childhood due,
When streaks of purple morn the cheek illume,
And light the drops of the Baptismal dew!
It is a precious sight which Angels view
In trembling joy and hope; immortal Love
Hangs o'er it, watching every opening hue,
For such alone on this bad earth may prove
Meet for his golden house in highest Heaven above.

Childhood, in God's own temple ever found,
As when the lamps of Eve their shadow flung,
And Samuel heard the awful voice profound;
Or when the Temple with Hosannahs rung,
And Christ was welcom'd by the infant tongue!
Yea, Christ Himself is seen a holy child,
Sitting His Heavenly Father's courts among:
Then what, O Lord, 'mong men by sin beguil'd,
Is for Thy temple meet, but Childhood undefil'd?

Sweet Childhood, shadow of celestial Love,
Train'd to look up, and hold a parent's hand,
And ever lift the eye to one above;
Which knows not yet while it obeys command,
Hopes all, and all believes; Elysian land,
Where that which is most lovely seems most true!
Sweet unsuspecting Childhood, whose sweet wand
Bids fair enchanting scenes arise to view,
Faint emblem of that Love that maketh all things new!

Thou dost o'er all thine own dear charms diffuse,
And through our weary life we turn to thee
As to a fountain fresh, where Heavenly dews
Are on each scene, and after all we flee
To what we loved in holier infancy:
Meek Childhood, in my soul again arise,
Drinking the air of immortality,
Thou shed'st o'er life a gleam of Paradise,
Lifting the earth to Heaven, or bringing down the skies!

Blest is the shield, when Childhood's Innocence
Watches around like some unearthly spell,
Ere it has flown before the manlier sense:
Instinctive spirits, which in virtue dwell,
Keep ward within, and from their citadel
Fly to the cheek at every thought of blame,
Conscious of weakness e'en in doing well,
Anticipate in fear the glowing shame,
The fear of ill more pure than virtue's boasted name.

Great be the heed no word nor deed unclean
Should soil that mirror which reflects the skies,
For evil Angels watch around unseen
To spoil that bloom so dear in Heavenly eyes,
Which nothing can recall: O learn to prize
That ignorance, let manhood wait awhile:
Manhood must learn of Childhood to be wise,
In wisdom prized of God, and free from guile;—
Her very light deceives, her wisdom doth defile.

Within the arms of the great Lord of love
As in the teacher's seat, thou gentle Child,
We see thee, all our wisdom to reprove,—
That we may learn of thee, thou wisest styl'd,
Learn virgin innocence, learn mercy mild,
Unlearn ambition, unlearn carefulness.
O life where state of Angels is fulfill'd,
And Saints, who little have and need still less;
A state which nothing hath, yet all things doth possess!

Then Thought awakes to earth, and sea, and sky;
And Faith first dawning in the unharm'd breast
Tells o'er the tale of what it is to die:
Night after night, as Evening brings its rest,
The Day departing rises manifest,
And makes appeal—before his Judge he stands,
While Conscience, by Baptismal power impress'd,
Pleads with him, and points out to God's commands,
And Angels good and ill stretch forth their speaking hands.

Then the untamper'd Witness pleads within,
And good or evil gain their silent sway,
In thoughts accusing or excusing sin.
How little doth he deem, from day to day,
What dread spectators watch his destin'd way!
How 'mid assembled worlds he stands alone,
They see him pray, see him forget to pray,
While the accuser stands before the throne,
And when his arts prevail doth claim him for his own.

Then with the volume of his life outspread
Stands the recording Angel, trembling till
The day appointed is for ever fled,
And shews how little good, how much of ill,—
The broken vows and the untutor'd will,—
Points to the twofold tablet,—thoughts of awe
Resolves of seeking good, avoiding ill;—
And stern to view, refusing to withdraw,
Rising in mirror stern dread Sinai's written Law.

Now trample 'neath thy feet the deadly coil
Of that fell monster, for all Heaven is mute
And waiting for thee: in the tender soil
Of Youth's soft heart plant the immortal shoot
Of Heaven-born Virtue: it shall bear thee fruit,
And bind thy locks with amaranthine wreath.
Now ply thine axe unto the accursed root,
It puts forth leaves, and woos Heaven's genial breath,
But soon its fruit appears; that fruit is endless death.

In early years oft Satan steals within,
In soft and yielding hearts to drop the seed,
Till all unseen will spread the tree of sin;
Its leaves are evil thoughts which thence proceed,
Those leaves on which the undying worm doth feed,
With stealthy arms extending more and more
Over the soul, while none within takes heed;—
Yet Faith's strong prayer e'en now shall aid implore,
And cast into the sea the deadly sycamore[a].

And in soft Childhood's heart will virtue spring
Unheeded, there to drink celestial air,
And all the thoughts to her obedience bring,
Nourish'd day after day with dews of prayer,
Unseen, unknown, shrouded with many a care,
And scarce discernible to fleshly eye,
More and more bow'd to earth and hiding there;
But soon releas'd its stature fills the sky,
And soars the Angelic child of immortality.

That inborn Virtue shall become thy guide,
And lead thee on thy way and be thy light,
Still ever strengthening, ever by thy side
Holding thy hand, in arms celestial bright,
And home shall lead the wanderer of the night;—
As Azarias who Tobias led,
And on his father's eye-balls pour'd the sight.
Little they know the aid around them spread,
Who upward pass from thee, thou City of the Dead.

[a] St. Luke xvii. 6, as explained by St. Chrys. and St. Ambrose.

Come on, Aspasio, on thy Heavenly war
With shield of faith and with the Spirit's sword,
Scatter the sin which doth thy pathway mar,
Strong in the mail of God's unfailing word,
The Urim and the Thummim of thy Lord.
Walls as of emerald from the eternal throne
On either side thy mirror shall afford,—
The table graved on Sinai's rocky stone,
Or by the hand of God writ in the heart alone.

See how Occasion calls thee, while the sand
Of hurrying life admits of no delay,
And mount the step to the eternal land,
One step o'ercome more easy the assay,
While o'er thy conquer'd self thou gainest sway;
Haste to arise, and on the destin'd road,
In arms bright burnish'd with the Heavenly ray,
Virtue herself shall meet thee on the road,
And lead thee gently on to light's serene abode.

O Thou Who dost enlighten man's dark heart,
Light of the eyes, and life-enkindling fire,
Be Thou a flaming wall on every part
Around him; may his heart to Thee aspire;
Conscience keep guard within o'er each desire;
On Thine own eagle wings bear Thine own child
Unto Thyself, still higher and still higher;
Be Thou his guide throughout this desert wild,
In the Baptismal cloud or fire in glory pil'd.

Let peaceful Solitude that sits apart
Hid in her cave from the full glare of day,
Learning communion with the silent heart,
Teach him betimes to ponder all his way,
Teach him to know where he has gone astray,
Where he hath giv'n his heart to meaner things,
Where earthly idols he hath made his stay,
Where to past deeds of sin his spirit clings,
Where darkness o'er his heart her chilly mantle flings.

How oft his careless tongue hath kindled fire;
How oft his hand hath minister'd to ill;
How oft his eye hath drunk in bad desire;
How oft his feet have follow'd wayward will;
How oft low earthly thoughts his spirit fill;
How oft his palate seeks itself to please;
How oft his form is deck'd the soul to kill;
How oft his time runs to the absorbing seas,
Pursuing empty dreams, or lost in shapeless ease.

O spread the awful scroll and teach us now,
Lest Conscience sleep, while Justice' scroll is stor'd,
Nor know the dread amount of all her woe,
Till face to face she stands before the Lord,
And hears the sound of His undying word.
Or on the parting soul should Memory wake
To lift the curtain, and her light afford
To read the record, stifled Conscience break
Long silence with a voice the bed of death to shake.

Then through the vista of departed life
Shall gleam the moonlight shadows of the past,
Where light and cloud commingling seem at strife;
Guilt like a spectral shade shall rise aghast,
Remorse sad moaning like the rising blast,
Embryo Resolves, and Warnings light'ning-bright,
Witnesses trumpet-tongued now heard at last,
Occasions lost, and, standing in clear light,
Visions of the dark soul that lov'd the gloom of night.

Open the fount Baptismal of my tears
Within my heart of hearts; bid it to flow,
And wash my soul again from these my fears;
Drown the bad fires which in my spirit glow.
O light the lamp within that I may know
How far Thy seal upon my soul is riven,
The breadth and depth and height of this my woe,
How far from my true course I have been driven,
Where from Bethesda's pool the road is pav'd to Heaven.

E'en like some mirror of resplendent glass,
Or galaxy of isles and starry sheen,
There is a road whereon the ransom'd pass,
Wherein the life of each is fully seen;
"Ah me," I cried aloud, "I am unclean,
Through this Thy star-bright pavement I behold
What it is death to see; the crystal sheen
Of this thy mirror shews a deadly fold
Around my heart; I sink, all trembling, sad, and cold."

With that methought the form of Mercy mild
Upheld me by the hand, and bade me look
Sternly upon that self with sin defil'd;
More on that view and more I trembling shook,
And sunk upon my knees, and could not brook
That sight so dismal, till she pitying cried,
"Through Penitence's gate we now must look,
Lost is the happier path, to peace allied,
Yet fail not, cling thou still unto my sheltering side."

With that I came unto a place so sad,
I would not speak of it to happy ears,
Nor shapes therein that met me, sable-clad;
Shapes of remorse they were and stalking fears,
That glared on me, and told of long past years;
And much I question'd them, and wander'd on
Until I came to the dark lake of tears,
And kneelèd down to drink, and lo, thereon
Saw mine own image gleam, a spectre pale and wan.

Till from behind a torch's silent light
Shone in that bed of darkness, and I turn'd
To see who held that lamp, and saw the sight
Of that sweet form of Mercy: fitful burn'd
The lamp, and her pale cheek, thereby discern'd,
Had lost its brightness; "Let me on thee tend,"
I cried, "nor wander from thy presence spurn'd."
"The way is dark," she answer'd, "hither wend,
And join that ancient path which Heaven-ward doth ascend."

With that I upward sprung, as one new-born
Unto a second life, and full of wings,
Buoyant as erst on that Baptismal morn :
But she with sorrow answer'd, "Devious springs
Hence many a path and forms delusive brings ;
First o'er this lake of sorrows must we sail,
Where Doubt her overhanging shadow flings."
I saw meek Mercy's cheek with sadness pale,
Yet waxèd glad in hope that I might yet prevail.

"Oh, more than joys which unto youth belong'd,
If thou wilt still admit me to thy side,
And frown on me when I thy care have wrong'd,
Meek Mercy ! I will still with thee abide,
In all the ways of sadness would be tried;
No other boon I ask, I crave not light,
But beam of thy calm eye to hope allied ;
Wrap me with thee in mantle of the night,
To seek the shapes of pain that shrink from human sight.

"On all the ills which upon sin await
Fain would I tend with thee,—the silent cell
Of Want and Pain which sit before Death's gate,—
If at thy sheltering side I may but dwell,
And bear to them those mercies which I tell,
And which I need ; to them I would impart
Goods undeserv'd by me, my treasures sell
To buy the Kingdom of the poor in heart,
If haply I might learn meek Mercy's healing art."

She answer'd, "Heaven for them hath love in store,
Who see their image in the fount of tears,
And more and more their sinful selves deplore;
While the pale vision of their vanish'd years
Visits them, and a threat'ning aspect wears,
It finds them on their knees, nor e'er again
O'ertakes with its allurements, till their fears
Shall turn to hope, while at the Cross of pain
They drink the healing stores which dying life sustain."

"What service," I replied, "can I return
For gifts so great, for such exceeding love?
Earnest desire within my breast doth burn
To watch o'er Childhood, which doth heedless rove,
Nor knows the foe whose darts oft deadly prove,
Ere yet suspected by sweet innocence;—
To keep my ways and words lest they should prove
Wiles to Christ's little ones, snares of offence,
But most for them to seek Heaven's sheltering sure defence."

"Full much they need it,"—with a deep-drawn sigh
Meek Mercy answer'd, while the thoughts of pain
Seem'd kindling wrath in her unwonted eye,—
"Full much they need, for in this Christian land,
Careless of all things but of filthy gain,
So little their own ruin'd souls they mourn,
In their own paths their children would they train;
No mother's cares with Christian grace adorn,
No father's love is theirs with Christian fears to warn.

"Untaught of God they leave a parent's roof,
Untaught of God return: in baptiz'd hands,
(O shame, where Reverence self should stand aloof!)
The foulest thoughts are placed of Heathen lands;
What more could Satan ask? Silent he stands
Watching the unguarded hour, when Self-control
Sleeps, then with downy thoughts all deftly shod
He steals,—with flowers enwreathing deadly bands,—
To strew the floor which Heavenly feet have trod,
And dim in the pure heart the vision of their God.

"Thus to be left with Christian love unarm'd
'Mid blasts of death, in that confiding hour,—
O miracle that thou shouldst 'scape unharm'd!
O proof that Angels watch thee, tender flower!
Dear Child, though clouds around thy morning lower,
Yet love shall look on penitential tears,
Fair as the Sun that looks upon the shower,
And give the promise then of better years,
When e'en in Childhood's wants His rescuing hand appears."

"How can I thank the Giver of all good,"
I answer'd, "Who when I, destruction-bent,
Was on the verge of ruin, by me stood,
And, wrapp'd in seeming worldly accident,
One like His own good Angel to me sent,
On whom my love grew daily; and, the more
It grew, more deeply was my spirit rent,
And Pain was struggling with that deadly sore,
Planting new thoughts that might my ruin'd state restore."

Thou ever wast around me though unseen,
Watching around in ways unspeakable,
While I was hurrying on from scene to scene
As if my ways were mine. Yet like a spell
Baptismal power still held me, like a well
Flowing upon my soul with Sabbath thought,
Bathing with light; yet it became a cell
For Stygian things to hide in; and I sought,
Ah me, to quench the light by Thine own life-blood bought!

Still didst Thou bear me—still didst suffer long,
Still struggle with me, and with tender love
Imbue my heart, which only did Thee wrong,
Wasting my youth's affections; with me strove
Thy Spirit still, made meaner things to prove
My sadness; and whene'er Thy beauteous light
Fell on the things around me, they would move
My worship, and I gaz'd on the fair sight,
Turning my back on Thee, Who makest all things bright.

Still I was Thine, and Thou didst with me bear,
Thine in the womb, and in my childhood Thine,
Thine while I knew it not, and had no care,
My very hairs were Thine,—Thou didst incline
My heart to Thee, cherish each good design,
While still Thine own best blessings I defil'd,
Still breaking from Thee, making all things mine
By blending them with sin—mine own work wild:
Unmake me, and again make me to be a child!

Make me again hang on Thee, and look up
To all around me; give me here to know
Far less of this bad world; to drink that cup
Of sorrows which the childish heart o'erflow;
Take high things from me, give the lowly brow,—
Having and needing nothing, from Thy hand
Fed day by day, to be again e'en now
A child in wonder; all we understand,
Will seem an infant's dream in that celestial land.

Thou, my Aspasio, object of my care,
How shall I hide thee from the unpitying winds
Of this rude world:—and keep thy cheek so fair
In the sweet innocence of unsoil'd minds
From that which, ah! too soon, the spirit finds?
If I do love thee with a spirit's love,
In this bad earth where sin our vision blinds,
How should I pray some Angel from above
May guide thee from this world, and thy sure guardian prove!

Filioli nouissima hora est...
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H

IMAGE THE THIRD.

Death approaches, life flies; O pilgrim, why dost thou loiter.

Consider the Time of thy life [A] how uncertain it is, how short, and swift. This is represented by the person of an aged man; because at every moment Time is being renewed, grows aged, glides away, and dies. Make use of it therefore, as soon about to pass away. The Hour-glass [B] denotes its rapid flight, and on this hour and thread of life Eternity depends, into which Death is hurrying men while they think not of it. The hieroglyphic which describes Eternity among the ancients is the serpent forming a circle; for it hath neither beginning nor end; and this is hanging on the thread of our frail life. And this life in the meanwhile is flying away like the smoke [C], the bubble, the arrow, the ship, the river, the bird, the stag, and the vernal flower. We are cut down like the grass [D], and are extinguished like the candle [E] by the least breath of wind. We must watch therefore, for the axe [F] is laid at the root of the Tree. He who is wise will keep these things and live; and will do all things at each hour, as if it were the last, as the Angel admonishes him to do [G]. And with good cause indeed, for it is to be followed by a blessed or a miserable Eternity [H]: which is denoted by the palm-branch and the flaming sword on the circle.

The Shortness of Time.

"Come on, Aspasio," good Philander cried,
"Far o'er the hills the Heavenly City lies,—"
Aspasio started, for behind his guide
He listen'd to a lute, in loitering guise,
And fix'd upon a child his thoughtful eyes;
Seeing he sees not, nor in hearing hears,
But deep were mov'd his inward phantasies,
Moulding their converse from his eyes and ears,—
He starts, and with his friend in converse now appears.

"Philander, all things now a voice have found,
And speak as if they hasten'd on to die:
As now I listen'd to that plaintive sound,
It seem'd to me the voice of days gone by;
A child who in his heedless sports stood nigh,
Blowing light bubbles to the empty air,
Attun'd my thoughts to grave philosophy,
Till caught in music's dream I linger'd there,
And from his lightsome sports I drew me thoughts of care.

"From his creative tube each airy ball
Successive pass'd to the bright morning skies;
Taking its colour as the sunbeams fall,
The rainbow lent its own prismatic dyes;
It swells and soars and shines, and then it dies;
Each, gone or going, seems to speak the tale
Of mortal glory, how it instant flies;
If one above another seems to sail,
'Tis but a gleam without, within an empty gale."

"Strange thoughts which keep the loiterer still behind!"
Philander said, "that on your pensive ear
Come musically as the idle wind
On the Eolian cords: such thoughts should bear
With Heaven-aspiring wings of hope and fear,
And like the full-blown canvass urge the soul,
Not idly flap the pennon; night draws near,
Behold yon trooping clouds that westward roll,
All Heaven seems moving on, and distant is the goal."

"O thou that still forbearing hold'st my hand,
From the Baptismal waters my sure friend,
Though long I left thy counsels and command,
Till as upon a parent's grave I bend,
Fresh o'er my soul came my remember'd end,
And thou like some good Angel cam'st to sight,
Homeward an orphan pilgrim to attend;
That City then seem'd on the neighbouring height,
E'en as on yonder hill the evening suns alight.

"Still distance mocks me like a lovely star,
Receding from my sight as I advance,
Yea, while advancing, still I seem afar."
Thus as he spake he sank in pensive trance,
As if those musings serv'd but to enhance
His thoughtful idlesse. Lo, from bound to bound
An antler'd stag before them seen to glance,
Gathering fresh impulse as he touch'd the ground,
Into the thicket past—and stillness reign'd around.

"Mark you," replied Philander, "on each side
They of that golden City of the sky
Send forth these omens, ever thus to glide
Around our path to train to wisdom high;
Tokens and warnings people all things nigh,
All born of Heaven discern the Heavenly sign,
Stern monitors of life fast hurrying by;
To them that watch this world becomes a shrine,
And every sight they see a messenger divine.

"Swift as yon arrow cleft the vacant air,
Swift as yon bird that sought its woodland nest,
So life shall have gone by, nor passing spare
One trace to speak of all its sad unrest:
Swift as on clouds some vision stands confess'd,
Then vanishes before the shaping wind,
So all on which earth's glory is impress'd,
Pass soon away nor leave a wreck behind,
No vestige of what pleas'd th' imperishable mind.

"But to that City we are ever nigh,
Nigh and more nigh on each returning year,
But scenes illusive catch thy wandering eye,
And fill the soul: God has declar'd it near,
And they who know His mind and learn His fear,
Are taught of God to know that Day at hand;
Then all things speak aloud to eye and ear,
Speak of the Judge Who at the door doth stand,
They tremble lest they fail of that immortal land.

"At every turn of life to list'ning souls
The sounding of the eternal wheels is known;
That sea of glory ever onward rolls
The clouds and tempests, which precede the throne;
And that celestial City must have thrown
Her garb around thee, ere that face to face
Before the dreadful King thou stand alone;
Hour follows hour, and day fast wears apace,
To warn thee of night's fall, that shuts the day of grace.

"Now round thy boyhood's path they weave the dance—
Slow intermingling Hours, bright Day, fair Night,
Glad Seasons,—all with measur'd step advance,
Distinct in beauty, slow before thee light,
And toy and tarry with thy lingering sight;
But, as thine age advances, hand in hand
They soon will hurry thee, till in their flight
Scarce are discern'd the features of that band[a],
While impulse fresh they gain as they approach the strand.

[a] See Lyra Apostolica, p. 48. Edit. 1st.

"Each Hour gleams on thee like an infant's face,
Fresh yet distinct, whose features love may scan,
And Days and Nights and Seasons with a grace
Come forth by turns, in slow-revolving plan,
And linger, while they bear thee on to man;—
Soon all in fourfold shape shall seem to meet,
Like that by Chebar seen, the flying van,
And then shall drop their wings and hurrying feet,
And the dread voice be heard from the Almighty's seat.

"The more in man the immortal spirit grows,
The more he feels his fleetness; while the years
Still shorter seem as they approach the close;
See, as this woodland path before us bears,
First full and clear the column'd arch it rears,
From tree to tree the vista mark'd extends,
With narrowing arms in distance it appears,
Till roof with floor, and side with side it blends,
And in one little point th' o'er-arching pathway ends."

Conversing thus they went, and pass'd unseen
Down by a hanging rock, where deep below
The waters gather'd in a still ravine,
Then issued on their course with winding flow;
From 'neath that shady rock appear'd a prow
Moor'd by an aged man. They wondering note
His wings half hid behind, and wrinkled brow;
Strange visions of the past around them float,
As like some fabled shade he mov'd his silent boat.

Touch'd by his pole the fast receding bank
Went from them, down the stream with watery bound
They hurried, waves came rippling round the plank,
And parted with a soft and soothing sound;
Aspasio gaz'd again in thought profound,—
"Thou saidst, Philander, that the earth and air
Are sown with Heaven-sent teachers all around,
Nor are the waters silent,—fleet and fair,
Swift as they journey on the warning voice they bear.

"All speak of life fast hast'ning to its close,
The waters ripple on and downward go,
The bubble breaks, and passes as it glows,
We hurry down with unperceived flow;
Shadows are fleeting o'er the mountain brow,
Bright varied scenes recede and are no more,
On either side they flee behind the prow,
And hues of eve come on; clouds, waves, and shore,
All range themselves in words our fleetness to deplore.

"Of man's mortality one varied tale,
One holy dirge; his generations pass
Like yonder corn-fields, where the woodland vale
Opens behind, all in one golden mass
Laid low; new fields succeed, yet nature's glass
Still holds ourselves to view: now we discern
A nobler scene expanding; as the pass
Opens, yet left behind at every turn,
And no delaying hand can stay the vision stern."

Now fruitful glens behind withdrew from sight,
Bosom'd 'mid woodland heights, scenes bright and fair
Nestling in hidden nooks; now on the right
Opens a mountain amphitheatre,
With cots that look out from its verdant stair;
Fit haunts of ancient Time that mountain range,
The exile may return, and lingering there
Find lineaments untouch'd by harmful change,
While to his heart bereav'd all else is new and strange.

That Heaven-sent man of eld moor'd 'neath the shade
Embowering o'er their heads, and farewell took;
While as beneath the rock his freight was stay'd,
He pointed, "Up yon path and ivy nook,
There is a cell which overhangs the brook,
Which thoughtless men the house of Mourning call—
'Tis call'd the house of Wisdom in the Book."
Up the ascent they sprang, a winding wall,
And enter'd unperceiv'd in Wisdom's holy hall.

There one was laid upon a dying bed,
A man of God was sitting by his side;
And feebly lifting up his pallid head,
The dying man spake softly, and replied,
"I knew it well, full well, and often sigh'd
In days of blooming youth, to think how soon
The days of man, his pleasure, and his pride,
Nature alike and fortune's richest boon,
Fast hasten on to reach, and pass their waning noon."

Thus as he spake his sinking frame he rais'd;
"Well I remember, in my boyhood's prime,
There was a touching sadness as I gaz'd
Upon the footsteps of transforming Time,
The sweetest music was the evening chime
That spoke of days gone by; in very sighs
Was luxury; poets' tears and thoughts sublime
Would come and blend with tender phantasies,
As they who dress a grave with flowers of vernal skies.

"The passing flower and the Autumnal leaf,
Lov'd animals, and men that died around,
Touch'd oft my soul with thoughts of pitying grief,
And on the ear, responsive to that wound,
Hung poets' words of soft and plaintive sound;
Yet knowing still I knew them not: I tried
To look on all as vanity, nor found
How my poor thoughts the deeper truth belied,
So were those pensive thoughts to vanity allied."

"Therefore," replied the Priest, "of life's short span
'Tis writ so often in the sacred page,
Which, pointing immortality to man,
Holds up in mirror life's short pilgrimage,
In every form that may the soul engage,
And then each talent weighs in duty's scale:
Mysterious thought of never-ending age,
At sight of which the strongest heart grows pale,
And dreads ere that be won lest life itself should fail!

"Therefore life's glare which for awhile may play,
And throw a gleam upon the sepulchre,
Beguiles not him, who feels that his short day
Is hurrying on, to leave him standing where
He must meet Judgment on the eternal stair:
That as a mote to Heaven's immensity,
That as a sand upon the desert bare,
That as a drop unto the mighty sea,
E'en such is our short life to vast eternity.

"Each hour is like an Angel, which with wings
Comes from, and goes to Heaven: yet empty ne'er
Comes or returns, but some occasion brings,
And hastens back to Heaven, the tale to bear
Of evil, or fresh store to treasure there.
Wrestle as with an Angel with each hour,
And hold him; though he seem a child of air,
Yet he will in the struggle give thee power,
And though the flesh gets weak, will leave a Heavenly dower.

"Pity looks down from Heaven's o'erarching roof,
Awe-struck to see how swift our hour is sped;
To see while day and night weave the thin woof,
Eternity is hanging on the thread;
And then that hour that numbers 'mong the dead,
Numbers us among those that die no more:
Time marks not Death with unperceived tread
Steal on behind: but while he numbers o'er
His many days to come, Death shuts the eternal door.

"Death puts on every shape and varied dress,
Looks in at every door, hides in each scene,
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter's silver tress,
Childhood, Youth, Manhood, Age: in verdant green
Or pallid sere he lurks alike unseen;
At funerals or feasts a shadowy guest,
Thrusts his unwelcome head their mirth between,
And there marks for his own the unheeding breast:
Yea, every day we live we are by him undress'd.

"Death speaks to us in all things, drawing near,
Through all we love Death speaks to us, to move
The more by their lov'd accents: on whate'er
Flower, bird, or beast, we build and lean our love,
He takes it to himself that we might prove
Stay'd list'ners to his story: every night
He sends his image, wraps us in his cove
Of unavoided sleep, shuts out the light,
Puts life and friends away, and hides us from their sight."

The dying man was mov'd, with thoughts too deep,
For utterance too big, too big for tears:
Then spake at length; "I wake as from a sleep,
From visions which have haunted my past years,
The dread reality at length appears!
Such thoughts familiar from my childhood seem'd,
But when they mov'd my sorrow and my fears,
In fancy's fond irradiance fair they gleam'd,
Like gloomy clouds of night whene'er the moonlight stream'd.

"Scripture oft call'd aloud; in nature's glass
Mortality's strong picture stood to view,
Where human things as fleeting shadows pass,
And all within me own'd the likeness true:
Truth beckon'd, yet I ne'er did Truth pursue
With eager hands and to my bosom press'd,
But sported with her shadow as it flew,
And now she visits me with sad unrest,
When I would lay me down in calmness on her breast.

"It needs a faith long school'd in hourly life,
To feel the Everlasting arms beneath,
When in the bosom wakes an Ocean's strife,
And face to face looks on approaching death.
O Thou before Whom with our fleeting breath
The shades of Being pass, the All in All,
Whose lowest whisper Wisdom cherisheth,
Morn, Eve, Month, Year, and Fast and Festival,
How hast Thou call'd to me, when I heard not Thy call!"

The Priest spake calm and comfort, and his book
Unclasping, on whose bright and burnish'd page
Bright Angels seem'd, as if they radiance shook
From wings bedropp'd with gold:—"Each passing stage,"
He said, "of this life's sacred pilgrimage
Hath its own task assign'd, its duty given;
Each hour, in joy or grief, in youth or age,
Should like the wave bear impress of the Heaven,
Whether the blush of Morn, or the calm star of Even.

"Thy work this hour is patience: if the past
Hath set its image there where nought decays,
Deny not its own work to this thy last:
Strong yearnings ever mark'd thy vanish'd days,
And outstretch'd longings after absent ways:
That all is past, and now thy heart incline
To seize the present good as by it strays,
To Heaven's all-gracious will thyself resign;
The Heavenly Kingdom this; and this is life Divine.

"As strangers and as sojourners we stand
Before Him, in our sadness and our mirth;
He knows our fleetness, we are in His hand;
Before the sea and mountains had their birth,
Before were laid the pillars of the earth,
Thou art from everlasting: Thine ear hears,
Thy heart doth pity us, and knows our worth,
With Thee there are the everlasting years;
Thou weighest all our sighs, and countest all our tears."

He paus'd—for Death around in silence trod,—
On all the unutterable stillness lies
Of that dread hour when man must meet his God,
And spirits stand around: Aspasio's sighs
Philander heard, and saw his tearful eyes,
And led him forth without. One twinkling star
Look'd through the trees, silence was on the skies,
Save waters and a dog that bay'd afar;—
Stillness kept watch, with nought soft Nature's calm to mar.

"'Tis not life's fleeting things that move my tears,
But that they move me thus and do no more,"
Aspasio cried—"'tis this that wakes my fears:
I stretch my hands in vain unto the shore,
And still in vain my empty hands deplore."
"Remember," said Philander's voice serene,
"That now 'tis the last time!" nor added more,—
The youth with lifted hands and falling mien
Kneel'd down, where the broad moon broke on the woodland scene.

Then good Philander secretly was glad,—
Philander was his angel, and full long
Watch'd o'er him: now he saw him Heavenly-clad,
He pass'd on wings which to wild dreams belong.—
Aspasio woke, and felt himself made strong
With eagles' plumes and feet on high to climb.
Heaven seem'd all starry eyes,—like some sweet song
Linger'd those words with solemn under-chime;
"Remember, little Child, that now 'tis the last time!"

A
B
C
D
Ante orationem prepara animam tuam.
E
F
G
H
I
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q
R
Bona est oratio cum ieiunio,
et eleemosyna Tob 12.

IMAGE THE FOURTH.

Before thou prayest prepare thyself.

Since Prayer [A] is a conversing with God, betake thyself to it with care, and consider Christ as present [B]; nor put it off as this worldly Man [C] does on account of any business of the World [D]. But first setting aside all other things, when thou art about to pray examine thy Conscience [E], and cast from thee with detestation that most foul monster, Sin [F]. Set before the eye of thine heart the sufferings of Christ, and the Ten Commandments of God. And with Prayer unite Fasting [G], under which term is comprehended all Mortification, and also Alms-giving, [H]; for these two are the wings of Prayer. And now follow the guidance of thy guardian Angel [I] to works of good. Prepare thy mind with Silence [K], with Solitude [L], and religious reading, shutting the doors about thee in the secret chambers of thy heart. Stir up the affection of Hope [M], and lift up more earnestly thy prayer to the honour of God; for Prayer [N] hath the sword of the word of God, kindleth the heart into a flame, animateth to overcome vices: by these means endeavour to destroy thy Sins [O], and to obtain Virtue [P] from God. She standeth by the throne of God furnished with wings, to raise the soul from things of earth; and armed because she cannot be overcome by evil; but by means of the Cross, and through hardships, she obtaineth the crown. Prostrate therefore thyself before the Throne of Grace, and pray for her either as the criminal [Q], or as the poor man, or as the Bride. And this preparation of the mind Moses hath shewn [R] when he appointed the Seventy to share his earthly labours, and retired to be alone with God.

The Preparations of Prayer.

Come, then, Aspasio, to the house of Prayer,
There shalt thou dry thy self-accusing tears,
And flee the haunt of all-pursuing Care;
Nay, thou art here more welcome for thy fears;—
High as the lark, which at Heaven-gate appears,
Singing still soars, and soaring still she sings,
Till all unseen to highest Heaven she nears,
Scattering sweet peace from her melodious wings,
And all the welkin round th' o'erflowing music rings.

Prayer, key of Wisdom, Sorrow's antidote,—
Air breath'd on earth by children of the skies,—
The well of hope,—of living life the note,—
What strange omnipotence within thee lies,
Mighty to move eternal destinies!
An atmosphere of Heaven the soul to lave;
When seas tumultuous in the bosom rise,
O magic breath to still the stormy wave,
And fix the anchor sure in calm beyond the grave!

Yet think not all her house can enter in,
As worldlings deem, God must thine heart incline;
Her dwelling opes to all who flee from sin;
Hall within hall, and shrine beyond each shrine,
Still nearer Heaven, still more and more divine
Her mansions, as they near the eternal throne;
Thou step by step must leave whate'er is thine,
Gird up thy loins, and wrap around thy zone,
E'en till thy very self shall be no more thine own.

Think what it is, more near than man below
Holds converse with his friend, with eyes to eyes,
And ears to ears, each other's heart to know;
Think what 'tis thus in strange mysterious guise
To be admitted to the awful skies,
Thy soul to find an entrance to the place
Where Angels tremble; there thy spirit's cries
Do come distinct before God's dreadful Face,
Whose word is endless death, Whose favour endless grace.

More sure than stands this blue o'er-hanging arch,
More sure than pillars of the firm-set earth,
More sure than is the rainbow's glowing march,
Which amid tears unveils its glorious birth,
The Covenant of God, which hath gone forth,
That none shall ask of Him and ask in vain!
From Heaven's own palace to the meanest hearth,
Forg'd in celestial places, hangs the chain,
To lift men up to Heaven, from care, and want, and pain.

The only panacea for all ill,—
The fabled stone transmuting all to gold,
Yet needs no alchemy, but our own will,—
Turning our clouds to lustre,—earthly mould
To crystal gems,—making us to behold
Our promis'd skies in the Baptismal well,—
A charm to ope the ear, and to unfold
A secret which no alchemist can tell,
And holiness of life the all-constraining spell.

Oh, what mysterious power doth lead astray,
And give us palsied hands before the door,
Ready to be unclos'd whene'er we pray,
But soon to be shut up for evermore?
Which steals the key that opes to boundless store,
That gift which turns earth's thorns into a crown
Which shall be worn in glory, lifts the floor
Of earth to Heaven, and brings good Angels down,
And makes in daily life a Heavenly Father known?

It is the Prince of Evil,—for he knows
That Prayer the fountain is of strength divine;
The channel whence to earth all blessing flows,—
To this one end he doth his arts combine;
If Prayer within thee wakes, then will he twine
His toils around, and shoot the poison'd dart,
Bring worldly schemes before thee, or incline
Thy thoughts to fancied good, with covert art,
E'en like an Angel fair to steal into thine heart.

Hast thou not noted oft when on thy knees,
He shoots like lightning all forgotten things,
And stirs thy thoughts to *instant* charities?
At night Lethean dews about thee brings,
And on thy prayer hangs with oblivious wings;
But most, to antedate the rising morn,
Strange earthly projects in thy bosom flings,
Planting within thee any flower or thorn,
Lest thy first thoughts to Heaven, like incense, should be borne?

It is for this the busy world he stirs,
Glassing before thy mind through all the day
Wealth, honour, power,—whate'er thy heart prefers—
That by degrees he may thy spirit sway:
It is for this he throws before thy way
Some fancied gain, to hold thee thus intent
As on a game of chance, and with thee play,
That so thine earnest spirit, downward bent,
May heed not warning signs which God hath round thee sent.

Still God would to Himself thy soul recall,
And to th' employs of earth His blessing give;
He 'mid these growing chains and passion's thrall
Can set thee free, and bid thy spirit live.
But when soul-mastering projects in thee strive,
They are the net of evil; morn and eve,
And eve and morn, thy soul will be a hive
Of buzzing thoughts, which give thee no reprieve,
But when thou kneelest down thy spirit shall not leave.

Therefore before thy God in stillness stand,
And kneel in stillness; think thee one of old
Before thy Saviour brought at His command,
Who every thought within thee doth behold,
And knoweth thy desire while yet untold,
Who ne'er from those who sought him turn'd aside;
Think that e'en now, in seasons manifold,
In all thy wants thy spirit He hath tried,
That o'er thee, with thee, still His Presence stands thy guide.

Mark them who in His Kingdom came to dwell,
Each had his welcome as in lowliness
To deeper depths he in His presence fell:
Behold the suppliants which around Him press,
When less they ask'd then did He give the less,
When more they ask'd then did He give the more;
Infinite as the Sea His power to bless,
But Faith unlock'd the ever-growing store,
And measur'd pardoning grace as they their sins deplore.

Then like the Leper stand and pray aloof,—
Like the Centurion deem thyself unmeet,—
Like her of Canaan bow'd to His reproof,
Unworthy of the children's bread to eat,—
Choose like the accepted guest the lowest seat,—
Like the sad Publican cast down thine eyes,
And on thy guilty breast in sorrow beat,—
Come as one glad a servant's place to prize,
And as His long-lost son He will to meet thee rise.

Still urge thy quest like that meek Canaanite,
As Bartimæus blind cease not to plead;
Knock at the door throughout the livelong night,
Until thy friend shall answer all thy need;
Cry as the Widow till the Judge gives heed.
He hears thy prayer though seeming not to hear,
Counts all the words which from thy heart proceed,
To give thee more according to thy fear,
And when He seems afar 'tis then He is most near.

Without the falling shower and tearful gloom
The bow of Mercy shines not; and most bright
It glows when darkest is the tempest's plume;
The heavens come forth when sinks day's glaring light;
The stars shine brightest on the moonless night:
Death is the mighty teacher, schooling man
In one short hour to know himself aright—
His glory—beauty—power—his life's brief span,
And Death will teach to pray as nothing earthly can.

But most of all, in stern and calm repose,
Before thy conscience set the Crucified,
And number one by one thy Saviour's woes;
There in that mirror let thy life be tried,
And set the image of thyself beside;
There meditate, and tread, thy feet beneath,
Thy lust, thy malice, avarice, and pride;
Think of each sin which taints thy vital breath,
Of life that never lives, of never-dying death.

Thus think thou of thyself, and think of God,
And then what word can speak thy vanity,
Fleeing before the shadow of His rod?
When Judgment pours its flood of light from high,
Swift as the lightning bathes the earth and sky,
Soon to be follow'd by the dreadful sound,
Our life shall on a sudden open lie,
His knowledge all our being shall surround,
In twinkle of His eye is our whole compass found.

Thus may'st thou learn to know thy littleness,
And from thy fancied greatness to descend
To penitential thoughts which God will bless.
If still thy earth-weigh'd spirits downward tend,
Fasting is Angels' diet, and a friend
Which to the soul Heaven-soaring fervour brings,
And good desires which shall in Prayer ascend;
Till in that incense a pure spirit springs,—
Calm Love within thy breast, breeding Angelic wings.

That Angel then shall take thine hand, and lead
Thy steps to find thy Saviour in His poor;
Yea, thou shalt find Him in the cry of need;
And Lazarus who lieth at thy door
Hath friends above who walk the Heavenly floor,
And he shall sue for thee, and thou shalt find
That thine own Prayers gain wings and readier soar,
No more blown frustrate by the wandering wind,
And light unknown before shall touch thine eye-lids blind.

Then shalt thou see good Angels, hid from sense,
Gradual reveal'd to Love's discerning eyes,
And all the ways of guardian Providence.
Silence with Solitude shall make thee wise,
And bring thee nearer to the tranquil skies,—
Silence with Solitude where God doth dwell.
She far retir'd from worldly vanities,
Within the wilderness hath made her cell,
Peopling it with the thoughts of things invisible.

Sweet nymph, conversing with th' o'er-arching Heaven,
When Twilight lets her dewy mantle fall,
Thou goest forth in hallow'd time of Even,
While in the glowing West, all dark and tall,
The trees stand motionless, and on the wall
Of the blue East, the Moon climbs up the hill;
And all is hush'd, save haply the sweet call
Of some chance nestling bird, or falling rill,
With mountains listening near, majestic, dark, and still.

All things now call thee forth;—with solemn tread,
And finger on thy lip, O solemn maid,
I see thee stealing onward! Thither lead,
And take me to thy converse, through the shade
Of yon deep avenue, and in the glade
Stand listening, while the solemn nightingale
Cheers the lone heavens with darkness overlaid,
To speak to pensive ears her touching tale;—
And Wisdom's bird comes nigh, flapping his drowsy sail.

Then lead me with thee to yon neighbouring wood,
Where far retir'd in some embow'ring nook,
Dwells in his cave the hermit Solitude.
Where the intruding world comes not to look
On his calm shed and bright-embossed Book.
Where he, on eve of some great holiday,
Sits at his door beside the murmuring brook,
While sober Ev'ning, like a pilgrim grey,
Looks from his Western cell, and gently dies away.

All hail! dread Silence, Solitude, and Shade,
Children of Peace! ye witnesses have been
When on the mountain-top the Saviour pray'd,
Or in the nightly desert; there unseen,
Save by good Angels, in the dread serene
Where He approach'd His Father! nought was heard
To break the hallow'd stillness of the scene,
Save haply from its midnight covert stirr'd,
Hovering around its Lord, some solitary bird.

Blest Desolation! thine is Heavenly balm,
Soft as night's dew or penitential tears,
Partaker of th' unutterable calm
Which God inhabits: noise of rolling spheres
And all the passionate stir that fills our ears
Reaches not there, nor sound of hurrying feet,
With fretful circumstance of passing years,
Of days and months and seasons as they fleet;
Such is th' unearthly calm where man his God must meet.

Such is the stillness of the silent bier,
When first the disembodied eyelids ope
On everlasting things, and God is near.
In houses of our clay while here we grope,
Who thus with Prayer and Vigil learn to cope,
Shall see reveal'd o'er things so passing frail,
Walking upon the clouds, bright-vision'd Hope,
Having her silver anchor in the veil,
While streaming rays light up her soaring vision pale.

Spiritual armour and immortal aid
Be with us! for around us and within
Agents of evil hide in viewless shade;
The garb they wear are thoughts and deeds of sin;
Some in the soul their entrance now begin,
Others in desert places walk abroad,
Cast out, and watch till they may access win,
And enter; then they gain more sure abode,
And pass from soul to soul, on ruin's widening road.

'Tis Prayer that moves the silver bowers afar,
Gains wings, and through the ever-open'd door,
Swift as the image of the twinkling star
Shews its reflection in the Ocean's floor,
It moves the inmates of that Heavenly shore.
As gently rippling o'er the leafy shade
Comes the soft sighing gale, and passes o'er,
E'en so in Heaven each Prayer, in secret made,
Ruffles a thousand wings prepar'd for instant aid.

Soft o'er that Sea of glass the signal given
Runs, as the gentlest breath on lakes of spring,
Such love for wretched man there is in Heaven!
Virtue stands there in bright apparelling,
And at that signal moves her ready wing:
Sent down to guide the wandering child of care,
She bidden hastes her instant aid to bring;
The rainbow springs, and forms a glorious stair,
Where pursuivants of Heaven pass at a mortal's Prayer.

Virtue, disclosing ever-growing Love,
Shall lead her suppliants to the Throne of grace:
They in the blessed courts that are above,
Within the living centre of all space,
'Mid those blest companies shall find a place,
Far from the noise of earth and earthly wrong,
Where God Himself reveals His blissful face,
Seraphs and Cherub hosts and Saints among;—
There in the secret shrine His suppliants find a tongue.

There at the footstool is the Heavenly Bride,
In whom—for whom—the Intercessor pleads;
Touch'd by whose plea, through realms responding wide,
Worlds are refresh'd; and as she pleads His deeds,
The flush of joy through all the Heaven proceeds.
There in the pause of the Seraphic chime
Unutterable groanings tell her needs;
Burning with love, compass'd with awe sublime,
She prays her Lord to haste the blissful dreadful time.

There by her side the Poor in spirit kneels,
Driven by despair, yet hoping through despair,
Till fear new hope, and hope new love reveals:
He as he knows himself of graces bare,
The more is cloth'd thereby, and bow'd in prayer.
More lowly still on right-hand of the Bride,
The Penitent is kneeling on that stair;
Unmeet to be admitted to her side,
Bow'd down in sense of sin, and as a captive tied.

These suppliants, while they seem to walk on earth,
Are thus in Heavenly places when they kneel,
'Mid bands Angelic which in Heaven have birth,
Which haply hear their prayers, and with them feel,
So vast th' electric chain, such the appeal!
Start we to hear the overwhelming claim?
Yea, more than words the covenanted seal,
For there are Three in Heaven, one dreadful Name,
Which come to dwell on earth in spirits free from blame.

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IMAGE THE FIFTH.

In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus.

At all times, especially on seasons of meditation, give solemn thanks [A] to God for His innumerable benefits to thee, for Creation [B], for Redemption [C], for the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper [D], for the gift of Prayer [E], for the Virtues [F], for holy inspirations from above [G]. Observe also and give thanks to God for the protection of His good Angel [H], who hath defended thee against the wiles of the devil [I]: for His guardian Providence which hath preserved thee from so many dangers [K], which others have met with, from diseases, from falls, from maimings, devourings, from self-murder, from robbers, from injury and destruction by fire and water. And how canst thou repay Him for so many benefits? Give thanks unto Him, and especially for His having borne with thee with so great long-suffering, when otherwise thou wouldst have perished with wicked men and evil spirits [L]. Let thy heart therefore, in pouring forth the praises of God, hunger and thirst after Perfection [M], and know that there is no rest or repose to be found but in Him and in His will. May His good Spirit grant unto us those His wings of a Dove, that our hearts may fly away unto Him, and be at rest.

Giving Thanks for all Things.

And can Faith's prayer admit the soul to Heaven,
Where endless life is but one hymn of praise,
To happy song and adoration given?
Blessed Immortals, singing grateful lays,
What must ye deem of men's repining ways?
Lo! at the thought upbraiding visions rise,
And clothe themselves with shape, and catch the rays,
Coming like stars upon the evening skies,
And forms Angelic speak in their own Paradise.

One came by me and said, "And hast thou then
No voice of thanks; is His love nothing worth,
Who gave to thee to live 'mong living men,
And set Eternity around thy birth,
E'en as the circling sky surrounds the earth:—
Who knew thee ere yet form'd within the womb,
Knew thy first thoughts of sadness or of mirth,
And saw thy limbs their daily form assume,
Thy birth, thy life, thy grave, thy lot beyond the tomb?"

Another then drew near, and passing cried,
"Are no thanks due to that Immortal Love,
Who on the Cross to purchase thee hath died,
That so His death thy better life might prove?
Is this all nought thy thankless soul to move?
For such vast love He asketh no return,
But this—that thou would'st live for Him above,
Who came from highest Heaven thy love to earn;
Yet in thy thankless heart no gratitude doth burn."

Then like a cloud that clothes the evening moon
Another came,—"Canst thou those gifts recount,
While thou wert yet unconscious of the boon,
Which even yet thy highest thoughts surmount?
He bath'd thee erst in light's eternal fount,
And took thee through the gate of His own grave,
Unto the haunts of the celestial mount,
With dews of life the dying soul to lave:—
Such mighty gifts lie hid in the Baptismal wave!"

Another Voice then added, "Is it nought
That He who is thy everlasting good,
And thy new life by His own dying bought,
Should feed the life He gave by His own blood,—
Should e'en Himself become thy living food?
Each Sunday when with troubles thou art worn,
He from His grave-clothes, with fresh strength endued,
Comes forth anew, and like a Heavenly morn,
Again the Lord of Life within thy soul is born."

"Nor does it need thy thanks," another Voice
Replied, "that all the earnest heart demands
Is given to Faith's request, whate'er thy choice?—
Whene'er thou knockest, at thy lifted hands
The gate of every blessing open stands:
Each prayer is heard in Heaven, thy very sighs
There find a tongue, and sound in Heavenly lands:
Prayer opes the regal storehouse of the skies,
And shews a sign to which the Prince no boon denies."

"And is it nothing,"—through that blissful gloom
Answer'd another,—"that whatever grace
Hath led thee onward towards thy stable home,
Is but a ray from the light-giving Face
That lights the heavens? Whate'er on thy high race
Hath Heavenward aided thee, and given thee might
The pure and steadfast purpose to embrace,—
A power to choose the good and see the right,—
Is but a gleam pour'd down from Him the spirit's Light."

And then there came to me another Form,
Whose brow was cloth'd with wreaths of earthly love
Which never fades in Heaven; fresh beauty warm
Surrounds her with that light which glows above;
Whate'er on earth the heart doth sweetly move
Is but its semblance; then I seem'd to go
'Mid scenes of life, and with that guide to rove.
Ah, mortal blind, how little dost thou know
What care there is in Heaven, for men that dwell below!

How often when the foe hath shot his dart
Of evil thoughts, from his dark shades unseen,
Yet ere the deadly barb hath reach'd the heart,
Love's watchful guard from Heaven doth intervene,
And o'er thee set his sheltering shield between!
E'en as a mother o'er her sleeping child,
Who comes to watch, when moonlight rays serene
Fall on his countenance with radiance mild;
He all unconscious sighs in troubled visions wild.

If these raise not thy soul to Angels' lays,
Who loving ever sing and singing love,
Are not the ills thou scapèst theme for praise?
Each page of this world's hist'ry, as it flies,
Bears some new tale of human miseries;
And, as it passes by, each whispering gale
Is loaded with some cause for Pity's sighs:
How oft while Life tells her absorbing tale,
Suddenly looks on man Death's visage stern and pale?

I seem'd to pass this fleshly veil beyond,
By hand of that celestial Guide led on
To a transporting vision, which his wand
Open'd, a world where thoughts of men are known,
While here thick interposing veils are thrown.
Creeping 'mid creeping things their souls embrace
Great worlds, and here their mighty birth-right own,
Traversing earth, and sky, and time, and space,
Pent in earth-treading frames, and bound to earthly place.

Oft when we pine, afar from those we love,
More close are knit the spirit's sympathies
By mutual prayer; distance itself doth prove
A greater nearness; with such stronger ties
Spirit with spirit talks, that when our eyes
Behold each other, something sinks within,
Mock'd by the touch of life's realities;
E'en so that vision seem'd new sense to win,
Brought near to thoughts of men who liv'd in earthly din.

We heard the tongue of souls which rove apart,
Toss'd to and fro amid the mighty vast;
Heard the dark woes that rend the secret heart,
And outward accidents in vision cast
Before us; one in shipwreck on a mast,
In a dread struggle life and death between;—
One woke in sleep 'mid flames, then all the past
Came o'er him: all the shapes of death were seen,
Robbers, fell beasts, disease, Self-slaughter's murderous mien.

If hourly these attend on dying men,
And hourly still thy guilty head is freed,
Sure this should win from thee some thankful strain,
Some little prayer for them that are in need,
Some thanks that He for thee doth intercede!
If others' ills this warning voice assume,
And for thy gratitude like Angels plead,
Much more beyond this sky-o'erarchèd room,
Within that shadowy world whose portal is the tomb.

Oh, what a wilderness about us lies
Of spirits, each wrapp'd round in fleshly cell,
Could we but look beyond each other's eyes,
An universe of souls 'mong which we dwell,
Each in himself a world to Heaven or Hell!
Through moon-like shades my vision seem'd to soar,
To where the dead themselves were visible:
I seem'd to pass beyond this earthly door,
Which from the things of sense shuts spirits evermore.

"What are these awful sounds that fill mine ear,
And sights I see?"—then suddenly I cried,
And hurried forward; passing from the rear
I hasten'd, going by that Heavenly guide,
And seiz'd his skirt,—it was the other side
Of pallid Death, a dim and glimmering cave,
Where day and night alternately abide,
And earthward pass,—the other side the grave,
Where Life and Death are met, prayer hath no power to save.

Then by me pass'd a melancholy Form,
And as it pass'd it cried, like the deep yell
Of the low wind that sighs before the storm,
"Ah, were it not for that all had been well,
But for that glare of gold! but now the spell
Is broken, all is now for ever gone!"
"For ever!" cried another, and a swell
Of dying echoes answer'd that deep moan,
"For ever!" then there sigh'd a waking voice, "'Tis done—

Who could have thought it were so short?" and then
Another cried, "Ah, for one little hour,
Passionate love, could I in flesh again
Behold thee, thou couldst charm my heart no more!
Come let me scan thy features as of yore:
Like a poor fly within a spider's toil,
I sung and play'd away my scanty store
Of being; what I thought was glittering spoil,
Were but the scales that lit the wily serpent's coil."

"Oh, bear me upward to the realms of sight,"
I cried, "nor let me hear this sad despair;
I find no hour on earth, no evil sight,
But 'tis a theme to bless a Father's care;
And there are things beyond this earth and air
Which ne'er have reach'd a dream." Then from that throng
I hurried, and awoke with words of prayer.
Night's stillness linger'd yet men's homes among,
But from afar was heard the bird of morning's song.

And is my gratitude but like a dream?
And like the dew my morning orison?
Let not my thankless spirit dry the stream
That floweth from Thine own true Lebanon!
Thine ever bounteous care still floweth on;
I drink the stream yet seldom think of Thee;
And yet I breathe and live in Thee alone;
And every care that comes to visit me,
Is but the cloud that wraps Thy burning charity.

More dark the cloud, more near art Thou, as when
From furnace-flames Thine Hallelujahs sound,—
When Daniel prais'd Thee in the lion's den,—
Jonah with bars of ocean compass'd round,—
Silas and Paul in night and prison bound:
More bound without more free the spirit sings:
The spirit, when it feels the fleshly wound,
Runs to the heart with inward communings,
Till the cloud gleams with light, and music round it flings.

Thine elements all serve us, on us wait
The Angels of Thy bounty; one by one
They bring down blessings from the Heavenly gate,
And Thou Thyself dost bow Thy lofty throne,
And from Thy highest glory comest down
To walk with me unharm'd amidst the fires,
That Thou mayst take me hence to be Thine own,—
A worm, and one of earthly low desires;
Nothing of mine to Thee but Thine own Grace aspires.

Ye shining ones that walk on Heaven's high wall,
Look down, behold one from your heights around,
Come, see, and hear, bear witness to my call!
What miracle of mercy have ye found
Equal to mine?—with sins encompass'd round,
A lonely exile in the vale of tears—
One struggling 'mid the rocks, his comrades drown'd,
An unarm'd one trembling 'mid hostile spears,—
With such an one to walk th' Almighty God appears.

Me hath He call'd to love Him, me hath deign'd
To call His Child, for me His life-blood pour'd,
And when I turn from Him then He is pain'd:
To all things else His all-constraining word
Sets bounds, and o'er them throws His holding cord,
But to our love: He asks our being whole,
And who unto the soul can bounds afford?
'Tis He who can the Infinite control,
Alone can meet her love, alone can fill the soul.

I ask not wealth, I ask not length of days,
Nor joys which home, and rural sights bestow,
Nor honour among men, nor poets' praise,
Nor friendship, nor the light of love to know,
Which with its own warm sun bathes all below;
Nor that the seed I sow should harvest prove:
I ask not health, nor spirit's gladdening flow,
Nor an assurèd pledge of rest above,
If only Thou wilt give a heart to know Thy love.

As many as the crosses which abound
On every side our road which leads to Heaven,
So many tokens of Thy care are found,
To wean our fancies unto pleasure given;
To aid Thy Spirit which with ours hath striven,
And bring us to the Cross of Thy deep woes.
Here in the twilight of the silent even,
While life's short day to sable darkness goes,
My heart shall fly to Thee, and rest in Thy repose.

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IMAGE THE SIXTH.

Follow not thine own imagination, but patiently bear the Cross, and it will at length bear thee.

Anticipate the evils and inconveniences which may happen to thee even on this very day, and remember that thou art born again in Baptism, and called, under this common law, that thou shouldest carry thy cross together with Christ [A], and after Him shouldest enter into glory. Embrace therefore the Cross with St. Andrew [B]; and strengthen thyself by the example of the Saints, such as that of the elder Tobit [C], and of Job [D]. For by the great Charity of God [E], thy cross hath been weighed out for thee from all Eternity, in proportion to thy strength; and hath been as it were sent unto thee by an Angel [F]. If thou refusest this the Devil will impose on thee a heavier weight [G]. Resign thyself therefore unto God, that He may lead thee, and direct thee: for He only knoweth the ends of all ways [H]; and take care that thou dost not choose thy way from thine own understanding, being ignorant of all things; and console thyself by this consideration, that the cross of one short hour [I], will be compensated by an eternal reward [K].

Angels bearing Crosses.

The Sun was going down upon the sea,
And through th' autumnal trees was nearer seen,
Blending them in the golden blazonry
Of his full-glowing orb,—the trees between,
Far in the wood, in a small glade of green,
A mouldering chapel; and a pensive wight,
Come lately thence, was gazing on the scene
On a green turf hard by, as if the sight
Was blending with his thoughts which caught the evening light.

There, as he lay reclin'd, the slumbers crept
Upon his eyes, and thoughts, and solemn brow,
Fix'd in that pensive silence; as he slept
'Mid those bright clouds an Angel dropp'd below,
And he th' approaching presence seem'd to know,
Mingling his vision with celestial dyes,
While through his frame extatic fervours glow,
Caught in the sudden in love's sweet surprise,
And vented the deep thoughts that fill'd his awe-struck eyes.

"Nothing have I on earth that I desire
Of all that I have seen, or known, or lov'd;
I would within me keep Heaven's smould'ring fire,
And mortify the hopes that earthward rov'd,
For they have to my eyes but shadows prov'd;
But beck'ning onward with Angelic sign,
A beauteous vision hath for ever mov'd,
Still as I gaze puts on a face divine:
I stretch my hands in vain, and still in vain I pine."

In tuneful accents of Angelic love,
The ministering Spirit seem'd to say,
"Long have I o'er thee watch'd, and with thee strove,
Sent down full oft from courts of endless day
To turn aside from thy predestin'd way,
And bid the phantoms for awhile be gone
Which thy too eager steps had led astray;
Then griev'd to see thy sad and alter'd tone,
For know that man on earth can never grieve alone."

"And art thou then thyself all that I prize?
Let me behold thee," sad Antonio cried;
"Alas! we are withdrawn from mortal eyes,"—
Replied the Spirit, as a darker glow
Came round him,—"lest if thou shouldst haply know
Things that are born in Heaven, the worship due
To God alone thou shouldst on them bestow:
How do ye now each painted form pursue,
Catch at the idle shade, and then the vision rue?"

"Yet I to things of earth," Antonio cried,
"Have deem'd me wean'd; fed with Angelic food
Of abstinence, till lust and worldly pride
Were in me buried; and my thoughts have glow'd,
As if their earthly nature were imbued
With fairer lights from Heaven; till there doth break
That beauteous vision on my solitude;
Again the yearnings of my spirit wake,
A thirst within my soul which I in vain would slake."—

"Nor ever canst on earth," replied the Voice
Celestial: "Unto some meek souls is given
To have the things they love, and to rejoice;
Such as therein forget not things of Heaven,
As using not abusing; there hath striven
With thee a stronger spirit, keener bent
On ends proposed; as, when on skies of even
Thine eyes and all thy longings late were bent,
The image of lost good woke in thine heart unspent."

"Yet in the things of Heaven, and hallow'd shrine,
Where God is ever near when truly sought,
I thought to drink of freshness, and recline
On holier hopes into the bosom brought.
Beauty and Love have in me deeply wrought,
When I beheld His works, the deep ravine
And cataract; in them ennobling thought
Found language, from the Spirit's caves unseen
Answer'd an echoing Voice to the o'erwhelming scene,

"And deep call'd unto deep: for in the sea
And everlasting mountains seem to stalk
The shadows of the Infinite; and we,
When low-brow'd cares our mighty yearnings balk,
With th' unimagin'd mountains turn to talk
As to our brotherhood; in their reproof
To the vast Heavens, where the Moon seems to walk
Amid our homes, and o'er the azure roof
Night's multitudinous stars march forth and range aloof.

"For thus the ever-yearning soul finds vent,
In that she reads in stars, sea, sky, and night,
The Infinite and the Omnipotent,
Her only home and haven; and from sight
Of Nature's face withdrawn, and the deep light
Of her blue eyes, then access hath been given
To pillar'd shades, whose high o'erarching might
In its expanse would imitate the Heaven,
And in its pictur'd panes the varying skies of even,

"Through which the Moon looks softly. High o'er-wrought
In arch'd magnificence and glorious ease,
They body forth the Heaven-aspiring thought
In stony imitation, like the trees
Of some deep avenue: and on all these,
Hallow'd by adoration, would I gaze,
Till uninspirèd beauty fail'd to please;
And then I turn'd to where the spirit's rays
Light up the living face, and fond expression plays,—

"On some lov'd countenance; for gentle love
Is all we know of Heaven, and far and near
We rove our prison-house, in vain to prove
Fit resting-place, if aught of Heaven be here."
"See," whisper'd low that Spirit, "through yon drear
And narrow cave, which leads to open day,
A Form that hath no comeliness; while Fear
Waits on Him! take thou heed, nor miss the way,
Catching at rays that break through your dim house of clay.

"Amid things mightier far, both day and night,
Thou movest," louder spake th' Angelic sound;
"See the blind man, whom Nature shuts from light,
He walks the earth unmov'd, 'mid the profound
Of multitudinous mountains, and the bound
Of the great sea coasting unnumber'd bays,
And 'neath the cloud-hung blue o'erarching round,
Where the pale Moon glides soft on pathless ways,
Or Night's domain is lit with many-twinkling rays.

"He walks unmov'd;—nor e'er his glowing thought
One step in Nature's kingdom can advance,
Her pictur'd scenes are ne'er within him wrought
With rays that change the scene, and like the glance
Upon the music-speaking countenance
Break forth on Nature's face: in this thy cell
Thus walk'st thou, hedg'd around in earthly trance,
Nor canst thou know the things invisible,
Which with thee and around in light and darkness dwell.

"Ye live within a temple rising round,
Whose noiseless fabric all ethereal springs
On Heaven's elastic pillars from the ground,
Fill'd with bright Beings and with holy things;
Which more defies your faint imaginings,
Than sculptur'd heights he cannot see or feel,
Defy the blind man's feeble shadowings;
Ah, could one glance your earthly house reveal!
Ye stand alone unmov'd where countless Angels kneel.

"When closest leagued by human charities,
Affection her home-circle draws around,
And Love would imitate the happier skies,
Speaking in countenance and tuneful sound
Of love-endearing voice, new ever found
In friend or children sweet; in deeper love
The friends that are unseen with you abound,
On golden embassies sent from above,
In harmonies of Heaven they all around you move,—

"But mostly in your fancied solitude,
And poverty and grief; for things of men,
And all that doth allure to sensual good,
Thicken the scale that dims the visual ken;—
Therefore the lonely ruin, tower, and glen,
Ye people with unseen societies,
Truth on your spirits breaks, and therefore then
Ye feel them nearer, as to longing eyes
Music brings back the world that deep in memory lies.

"Therefore we nearer draw in curtain'd sleep,
For then ye are remov'd from outer sight,
And are brought nearer Heaven, and worlds more deep
Than waking thought divines. When the dark night
Surrounds you, or when gloomy woes alight
Upon your path, oft in that cloud we move.
Yea, oft when ills your sinking souls affright,
They are but visitings of Heavenly love,—
The moon and stars appear when Darkness round doth rove.

"That thou mayst pray for them thy foes are given,
That thou mayst look to God I bring thee pain,
I bring thee cares that thou mayst look to Heaven,
I bring thee fretful friends that thou mayst train
Thy soul to patience; what thou deemest gain,
When closest wreathing chains around thy soul,
I rend from thine own bleeding heart in twain,
That He who bought may have thy spirit whole:—
Spurs that may give thee pain, but urge thee to the goal."

Then he disclos'd, as in a vision wild,
A road to Heaven, where unto each was given
To bear his cross by love of Christ beguil'd—
Angels that carried them 'mid clouds of even—
And Love that weigh'd the cross of each in Heaven—
And they that parted from that holy load
Into self-chosen paths by Passion driven,
Laden more heavily on the false road,
Stray'd amid tangled paths and miss'd their last abode.

The cross Antonio seized, and gazing cried,
"This to my breast I clasp, and ask no more,
Nor ever from my spirit lay aside:
This is the richest gift Heaven hath in store
For exil'd man, beyond where spirits soar
Weigh'd out in scales of boundless charity,
And brought by Angels through the Heavenly door;—
Then let me seize the cross, and follow Thee,
My Master and my God,—no more I wish to see!

"If only step by step, a pilgrim blind,
I may but follow Thee, nor rove in vain
'Mid those enticing ways which endless wind;
If so I may at length that path attain,
Wherein Thy Saints with Thee the Cross sustain
Along the road to Heaven; yea, now I learn
That wisdom which doth make each step of pain
A step to Heaven; we need not that discern,
But bear the Cross, and that shall to a sceptre turn.

"Now I behold how worldly gain is loss,—
That weeks and days and hours that by us fleet,
Must bear the Royal impress of the Cross:
As sounds discordant blend in music sweet,
And warring elements for union meet,
Thus tempers rude, and elements of strife,
And roughest chances on our path that beat,
Divinest Love hath found with music rife,
Moulding th' harmonious soul meet for immortal life.

"That I may pray for them let foes be given,
That I may look to God let me have pain,
And bring me cares that I may look to Heaven;
And bring me fretful friends that I may train
My soul to patience; what I deem my gain,
When closest wreathing chains around my soul,
Take from me, though it rend my heart in twain,
That He who bought may have my spirit whole:—
Spurs that may give me pain, but urge me to the goal.

"Like one who on a rock with out-stretch'd arms
Hangs, struggling there his footing to retain,
While each returning wave with new alarms
Threatens to bear him to the angry main,
So to the Cross I cling, (O blissful pain!)
Well-nigh o'erwhelm'd with the loud-roaring tide,
Which to the world would bear me back again,
Labouring to seize with jaws devouring wide,—
Oh, may I for a while beneath Thy shade abide!

"Nay, let me cling to Thee, and o'er the sea
Thou shalt sustain me to the stable shore;
Life-bearing wood of the all-saving Tree;
And lift o'er wat'ry mountains rising hoar!
Hail, little plank, sent forth to bear me o'er,
While Faith like some good Angel holds the helm,
Though dark and drear the Heavens, and billows roar,
The stars come forth to people all the sky,
And rule my course, while Faith her saving bark shall ply.

"And I, with you that throng th' aerial plain
And seem to view us from your calm abode,
Would hold companionship. Ye there attain
Your blissful stations; on your earthly road
We see you bearing each his destin'd load,
Like that Cyrenian on the hallow'd hill,
Following the path the Man of Sorrows trode,
None in that band without his share of ill,
Walking their Heavenward road in solemn silence still.

"This Cross I clasp, and in my heart will hide,
And care no more for the bright dreams of sense;
I clasp it to my breast, nor lay aside
Until I shall resign this fleshly fence
Which keeps me from the Day." Then vanish'd thence
That vision; as it pass'd with blue eyes mild,
As of ten summers, sweet in innocence,
A face beam'd on him, and the music wild
Linger'd of that sweet voice as of a gentle child.

The rising Moon with silver-horned brow
Look'd through that sylvan Church; and 'neath the fall
Of gradual night the evening star e'en now
Led forth the watchmen of th' ethereal wall;
And from afar was heard most musical
A herd-boy's singing voice;—a lonely bird
Wing'd his way homeward,—heard at interval
On the blue vault; then Silence did afford
Meet audience, that sweet voice was in the stillness heard.

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IMAGE THE SEVENTH.

Pity the Church thy Mother, and endeavour to support her by thy zeal and integrity.

Consider the Church [A] that she is as it were the Mother of the Faithful; and that she is sore beset by enemies [B], by evil spirits, by bad men, heretics, and idolaters, who oppose her by the sword and by the pen. So that the devil is withdrawing and rending from her a great part of the world [C]. Behold her entreating from her own children [D] the aid of their Prayers, and demanding of them amendment of life: while she depends for her defence on the protection of the Holy Spirit [E] and His good Angels [F]. And this Jesus Christ Himself, our most merciful Lord, requires of us, Who gave Himself for His Church, and hath committed to her the Book of Life and Keys of Remission; and hath graciously promised to be with us even unto the end of the world, although He well knew that by so doing He would be laden with many injuries, which it is our duty to avert by our fervent piety.

The Church
asking the Prayers of her Children.

Lift up thy voice, get up unto the mountain,
Say unto Sion, from thy trance awaken,
Thy sea goes forth, in every land a fountain
Springs forth to thee! O now no more forsaken,
Thy glory the destroyer hath o'ertaken;
City of God, great things of thee are spoken!
Death's kingdom to its centre hath been shaken,
All nations have discern'd the glorious token,
Lift up thy mountain voice, the spell of death is broken!

O happy vision, which an Angel sings,
Like some sweet lark hid in a cloud of rays,
Till all around a little Heaven she brings;
In widening circles far the music strays,
And list'ning Silence echoes back the praise!
Blessed is he that loveth thee, O Sion!
Blessed is he that hastens thy good days,
Who toils to heal thy wounds, and bind in one,
Pouring in oil and wine, the spirit's benison.

Makers of peace, the children of our God!
Ye are the generation whom the skies,
And they who Heaven's immortal floor have trod,
Admit into their sweet societies;
Such share their ministries; such Angels prize;
Saints in their beds of rest with them rejoice,
And join with them their prayers and charities,
Till Heaven itself shall gladden at their voice;
Love is their wisdom, Love their everlasting choice.

Love is that sweet embalming of great price
Which came on our High-Priest, and made Him meet
To be the all-atoning Sacrifice.
It came upon His head, went to His feet,
And to His clothing's skirts, and made them sweet
With the high savour of immortal love.
Love is the oil of the great Paraclete,
Which sweetens earth below, and Heaven above,
Till e'en the meanest child the fragrant power shall prove.

But how shall we promote thee, Love divine?
How spread abroad thy charities aright,
Or plead thy cause with any arms but thine?
Save drinking first of thee, thou blessed might!
He who attaineth love attaineth light,
But fire that would enlighten first must burn;
Christ's love alone His children can unite,
The stars of night on their own courses turn,
But all from the great Sun their life and glories earn.

Great tabernacle of immortal Love,
From highest heights descending all unseen,
To hallow earth and fill the Heavens above;
What envious clouds do mar thy shape serene?
Art thou indeed that sky-descended Queen?
How to the ground is cast thy glorious crown?
Where the commanding grace and matchless mien?
Thy towers are spoil'd, thy hedges broken down,
And thou, O Vine of Heaven, with poisonous weeds o'ergrown.

O Lord, Who, as Thy Church's holy token,
Thy seamless coat upon that dreadful morn,
'Mid soldiers' violent hands didst keep unbroken;
Is this Thy robe in thousand pieces torn?
Is this the healing garment Thou hast worn?
Is this Thy Body which Divine control
Unbroken kept, though pierc'd by many a thorn,
Which Joseph wrapt in the embalming stole,
Entire as Thou must dwell in the believing soul?

O rude and ruthless hands, to rend in twain
Christ's robe, which e'en the murd'rous soldiers spared;
To glory in the deed, and deem it gain!
Ye too with sacrilegious spoilers shared,
Leaving her broken, desolate, and bared;
Then fiends rejoic'd, and in that boasted name
They saw your house divided, strength impair'd;
And still ye boast that freedom without shame,—
Your bond is Discord's name, your glory sinful blame.

And thou, O bound by a mysterious spell,
Who on thy seven-fold hill dost still remain,
In stern impenitence unchangeable,
And in thine attitude of boundless reign
Binding thyself around as with a chain,
Combining earth with Heaven in Roman mood,
Are thy celestial garments free from stain?
Where art thou seen the mirror of all good?
Say, in what land are not thy footsteps mark'd with blood!

How o'er thee weeps the mother of thy Lord
Herself enthron'd in God's own house to find,
E'en as the Spouse of the unfailing Word:—
Yea, in the temples of the soul enshrin'd,
And like an idol imag'd in the mind,
Till God's pure worship there can find no place!
O burst thy chain, to penitence resign'd,
And strive with us that we may find such grace
Again to be all one, and see God's holy face!

For if we were all one, a temple meet,
We should behold His love, whose beams so bright
Would then transform us to His holy seat:
But while Rome, unrepenting, boasts her light,
She is encompass'd with a twofold night;
To seek her is to seek a double curse;
'Tis first disloyalty which blinds the sight,
'Tis then with blinded hands to choose the worse:
Her very boast of light her judgment doth rehearse[a].

[a] Rev. iii. 17.

Whate'er in restless lust for things beyond
My fancies would entice, and make me wise
To lure me on to that mysterious bond,—
Where Truth's celestial form is wreathed with lies,
And choked and hid in foul idolatries,—
Though knit to my heart's core through every sense,
Associate with all dear to my sad eyes,
Though my heart bleed, yet will I pluck it thence,
Ere my youth's guide I leave—my guardian Providence.

How in each breast shall Peace celestial dwell?
It hath no way, it needs no other art,
No man or Angel hath devis'd a spell,
Save seeking God with undivided heart?
Then her own peace Obedience shall impart:
Peace, the surpassing music of the skies,
Turns all to love, love is her Heavenly mart,
Love tunes the ears aright, looks from the eyes,
And bathes all things around with her own harmonies.

So with the Church by endless discords riven,
One way alone her union can restore,
And gain the blessing to that union given,
Obedience of a spirit meek and poor,
And Christ Himself the everlasting Door:
Obedience to the eyes is Heavenly light,
Struck by whose rays self-seeking is no more,
Then schisms and heresies shall hide in night,
And one harmonious bond discordant souls unite.

It was for this of old Apostles taught,
It was for this that Martyrs shed their blood,
It was for this that Saints have marvels wrought,
It was for this that Confessors have stood,
It was for this that Virgins meek and good,
And holy men in cells and deserts prayed;
That Love's great secret might be understood,—
That all with Christ's one robe might be arrayed,—
And 'neath one Shepherd all one fold celestial made.

They deem'd one narrow road the way to Heaven,
But manifold the paths that lead to Hell,
And manifold the shapes to wand'ring given;—
One only robe of Christ, one only spell
Unbroken, and of life one saving well.
But who shall now discern the Heavenly Bride?
And who shall now Truth's royal signet tell?
O Truth, thyself within my soul abide,
Lead me through tangled ways, and be thyself my guide!

Yea, we believe her glorious yet within,
With beauty undiscern'd by mortal eye,
Yet seen in Heaven. Her glories shall begin
To come serenely forth, when earth and sky,
Like morning mists which shroud her, shall pass by;
Then like the radiant Sun on either hand,
With beauty clothed and immortality,
She shall break brightly forth at God's command,
And filling earth and Heaven a living temple stand.

What if her glory meet not mortal sight;—
Who on the burning orb of Heaven can gaze?
Clothed with the solar robe of Christ's own light,
Too pure for mortal eyes her living blaze,
Too bright her incommunicable rays!
Though strifes and sorrows, dark and manifold,
Encompass her with clouds; in her meek ways,
She walks within that City paved with gold,
Whose lustre is too fair for sinners to behold.

Who can discern the beauty of that power,
When endless life within the soul is born,
When glistening in the fresh Baptismal shower
Dawns on the soul the everlasting Morn,
And rainbow-hues her earthly clouds adorn?
There is no comeliness that we desire,
Though Christ's long promis'd glory she hath worn,
Nor can our eyes perceive His robe of fire,
Which wraps each soul that stands in His celestial choir.

She sits,—Heaven's Bride, but in an evil world,
And sore environ'd by unnumber'd foes,
With wiles and weapons stern against her hurl'd;
The Child of life, death's shades around her close;
The Crown of joy amid o'erwhelming woes:
Her right-hand holds the keys of death and life,
And calm she sits in undisturb'd repose,
But all around with hostile arms are rife,
And foes of earth and hell are arming for the strife.

Satan with eager unremitting grasp
Struggles to wrest the world from her blest fold,
And thrusts the Cross from him his own to clasp;
Now plies with stealth, and now with aspect bold,
Whatever means his kingdom may uphold;
But most he strives to bury Truth with lies,
Or paint her holy visage dark and cold,
Stirring a hell-born brood of calumnies,
To hide her genial eye, and poison all the skies.

Now he draws thousands from the Christian name,
Banded in arms and arts of Mahomet;
Now Puritanic fevers fans to flame,
To break down thrones and altars fiercely set;
Now Heresies and Schisms their arrows whet,
And turf unhallow'd builds self-chosen shrines;
Now close he hides to draw more sure his net.
Yet still she lives, and heeds not, nor repines,
But on her Saviour's breast her holy head reclines.

Thus have I often seen a vernal rose,
Which 'mid the lowering storms untouch'd appears,
Though hostile lances all around her close,
Yet o'er the palisade of armèd spears,
Her loveliness unharm'd its beauty rears,
And day by day expanding drinks the shower:
E'en so unfolding to the eternal years
The Church discloses her ethereal flower,
The many-folded Heavens of her unfading bower.

All things which here are cast in beauty's mould,
Awful or fair, of soul-entrancing power,
Speak but the things of her celestial fold.
Heart-stirring love in youth's first blooming hour,
Gazing intense on beauty's short-liv'd flower,
Speaks but the love of that immortal Bride,
And beauty, which is her resplendent dower:
Riches speak treasures which with her abide,
And Fame th' unerring Praise which God sets by her side.

The gems in Ocean's breast, and living spars
Deep hid in Earth's dark bowels far below,
Shall pave her wond'rous pathway to the stars;
The fairest hues on Eve or Morning's brow
Are shadows of her glory; Heaven's bright bow
The emblem of her Covenantal sign;
Birds' songs are Angels' voices, as they go
Bearing their aid to weary souls that pine;
All blessings are but streams from her life-giving shrine.

I saw, or dream'd I saw, her awful form,
And said, "If thou art girt with sure repose,
Thyself calm as the Moon within the storm,
Why do these ills thy very life enclose,
And thus thy inmost being blend with woes?
Thy friends—thy very household—peace will hold
With the bad world, are chosen by thy foes,
Thy hallow'd offices are given for gold,
Or worse than given for gold, to thine own foes are sold:—

"Their price to fight against thee,—that meek men
Doubt if they can believe the impress thine,
Which comes in shape so questionable, when
The rust so thickly hath o'erlaid the sign,
Although beneath the Image be Divine."
She answer'd, "Troubled spirit, peace, be still!
I, in the calm unearthly, dwell with mine,
And thou must come to me,—thence judge of ill,
Not in that troubled world where cares thy fancy fill.

"Couldst thou but see as from a Heavenly place,
Calm as the moon, while ye are bow'd to sense,
And wrapp'd in joys and sorrows; could ye trace
How all are mov'd by sweetest Providence,
Educing good from evil: forming thence
A noiseless temple, where the living stones
Are built up one by one! While the offence
Darkens your hearts, and your frail spirit groans,
Then is the time when God builds up His chosen ones.

"Come thou to me into that moonlight calm,
Where I abide in the tempestuous night,
And judge therein of all things." "Sweet as balm
Thy words," I cried, "for cares my soul deform;
Then take me 'neath thy mantle of calm light,
That I may strive for thee; nor yet dark care
Sadden my spirit, nor contentions blight."
"Thy love they may but sweeten," smiling fair
She answer'd, "to this calm the door is fervent prayer.

"Thy prayers I ask, I ask thy spirit clean,
And pure thy hands, that thou in prayer below
Mayst lift them up for me in thought serene.
I ask thy prayers, ah, little do ye know
How much by prayer one fervent soul may throw
Into the scale where kingdoms now are weigh'd:
Cleanse thou for this thine heart; for this thy brow
Bow down to earth; and seek the lonely shade,
That thou in needful hours mayst lend the Church thine aid.

"I ask thy prayers—thy earnest prayers I need—
What, should I ask thy life! for me His Bride
The Lord of Life Himself did dying bleed,
And when He died for me for thee He died,
And thou with me wast taken from His side;
What then if I thy dying life demand,
Live thou for me, in prayer for me abide;
I bear the Keys to the eternal strand,
And thou the Book of Life receivest at my hand.

"Who prays for me doth for his brethren pray;
And on the wings of his own charities
He shall be borne toward Heaven, in thoughts that sway
His better life,—by prayer itself made wise:
His very words will come back from the skies
Laden with thoughts of love; and o'er the cloud
Of earth-born fears his spirit will arise:
He shall look calmly through the stormy crowd,
And e'en to fight for God shall be to him allow'd.

"And what though all the world be leagu'd around,
The holy Intercessor never dies,
And by His bleeding brow and flowing wound,
Love turns to you her supplicating eyes,
Not to forget His dying charities,
But join your prayers with His; such incense, sent
From contrite hearts, shall join His sacrifice;
Ere life, the time which unto prayer is lent,
Or love, which is the life of prayer itself, be spent."

PART II.

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IMAGE THE EIGHTH.

Why art thou delaying to turn thyself unto the Lord God, and in Him unto all good?

Be immediately turned, O thou sinner, to thy Creator and Redeemer, nor defer to do so, as the Doubtful man [A]. For Death, though thou seest him not, is close beside thee. Lo, Jesus is ready to receive thee [B]; behold His wounds, observe the instruments of His sufferings [C], and His most gracious approaches unto thee. Despise thou the World [D], and her deceits; detest Sin [E], that most foul monster, and follow Christ. And now look to Virtue [F], which the Angel [G] pointeth out to thee, and consider the reward she beareth. In order that thou mayest attain unto her and her rewards, betake thyself to contrition for thy sins [H], and confession of them [I]; and imitate the examples of penitents [K]. In this way thou shalt be liberated from the yoke of Pharaoh, the spirit of evil, and from his bondage; in like manner as the children of Israel were on their coming out from the land of Egypt [L]. Nor stop thou here, O pilgrim, but proceed onward to thy country; and make thyself a way and fortify it by Alms-giving [M], by Fasting [N], and by Prayer [O]. Oh, how do the Angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth! [P]. Oh, with what rewards will the soul of that penitent be crowned in Heaven!

The Complaint of the Penitent.

O Thou that send'st the genial drop from Heaven,
On the dry bud else withering ere it blooms!
O Thou that hear'st the cry of famish'd birds,
When Nature's stores are lock'd by Winter's hand,
Letting a gentle-handed spirit forth
To ope the doors of the relenting South!
  To Thee looks forth and supplicates Thy dew
Each bud of Grace Thou graftest in my breast,
Scorch'd 'neath the blasting influence of the world:
To Thee each better thought doth feebly cry,
Upon the wintry branch of my cold heart,
That it may be restor'd and sing to Thee.
Thou bidd'st the waters flow, and o'er the heart
Shall flow the fount of penitential tears.
Like some soft opening wind Thy Spirit breathes,
And breaks the icy fetters of the soul:
Then, from the frost-barr'd gates of wintry thought,
Love shall awaken to melodious praise,

And verdant green shall shew Hope is not dead,
In that great world wherein the Spirit lives.
Where have I wander'd on the edge of death,
Of death that dieth not, of endless death?
While Doubt stood list'ning to the syren notes
That call'd me to the world, and knowing not,
I drank th' intoxications of her cup,
Which fill'd my fancy with unreal joys;—
Wreathing my fever'd brow with withering flowers,
I eyed me in the glass of vanity,
And stalk'd a painted shadow on the stage.
Awful infatuation, for the while
Death unperceiv'd his ever-ready dart,
Big with the fate of all eternity,
Aim'd—but deferr'd the blow! Thy mercy still
Held his pois'd hand, while I discern'd Thee not.
On bended knees I would return to Thee,
Renouncing this bad world: now I behold
How on the verge of never-ending woe
Man doubting stands, yet plum'd with pride the while,
Folding his arms in self-admir'd repose,
Cased in self-confidence; embodied there
In the world's mirror I behold myself;
I too like him have listen'd to the world,
And, while her syren notes were on my ear,
Hung on th' enchantment; as when one at eve
In distance hears some sweet melodious chime,
And lost in dreams of pleasing phantasy,
Forgets his home and his unfinish'd work,—

How have I in the ways of pride and care,
Labour'd in doing what I must undo;
Undoing that which Christ hath wrought in me!
Still nightly, with confession and remorse,
Fain to unmake the work of the past day,
I weav'd the web of that fam'd heroine,
Yet to beguile not others, but myself,—
Not false fidelity, like that fam'd wife
Faithful though false,—but weaving the vain web
Of self-deceiving falseness. Now I turn,
And with uplifted hands again abjure
Sin and the world, and turn again to Thee.

Thine own good Angel doth before me come,
And with his hand points to Thy dying wounds,
The scourge—the pillar—and the twisted thorn,—
Tortures and mockeries rude together wreath'd,
Around Thine innocent brows a burning crown,
While drops of blood run down Thy pallid cheeks.
And then I hear Thee preach,—as up that hill,
When sinking 'neath the weight of that dread Tree,—
To Sion's daughters—and in them to me,
"Weep not for me, weep, mortal, for thyself,
For thou thyself hast greater cause for tears!"
Lo, in the shades, half earthly, half divine,
Stands Virtue's form in silent eloquence,
Born from the seas of that Baptismal wave
Which issued from Thy side, the fount of Love,
Pointing to Thee and beck'ning on to Heaven;—
All-cas'd in arms of Thy celestial store,

Who givest gifts to men; and in her hand
The golden crown of an immortal Heaven!
All have I cast upon a moment's die,
Thy Blood, Eternity, the prize of Life,
Barter'd for baubles, and have sold Thy love,
Sold endless bliss, to buy eternal pains.
Between the porch and altar[a], lo, I kneel,
Unworthy to find entrance—where the Font
Against me witness bears, wash'd, ah, in vain,
In vain Thy grace receiv'd! Alas, e'en now
The Altar where Thy presence is unseen,
Appeals to where Thy Face shall be beheld—
The dread tribunal of Thy Majesty.

O awful hour that endeth all our time,
When we before the Judge shall trembling stand,
Who shall disclose the heart's deep labyrinth,
When sins of night shall see the face of day:
When Earth and Heaven as witnesses stand by,
And faltering tongues to gather'd worlds confess!
Where is the Priest who at the Altar waits[b],
Who shall e'en now receive th' o'erchargèd breast,
Unload the labouring bosom of the stuff
That weighs and stifles now the spark of life?
That clad in deep abasement here below
A sinner may go forth in th' eye of Heaven,
And so, self-humbling, may compassion win

[a] Joel ii. 17.

[b] See Exhortation in the Communion Service, "Let him come to me or some other Minister."

Of Angels, who have seen his guilty deeds,
And loath'd and in abhorrence turn'd away,
With hands averted and with looks of shame.
How have I soil'd Thy garb of Heavenly white!
Now for the spotless white of Thy pure robe
I clothe myself in sackcloth's mourning weeds,
And sit in sorrow: nay, will rise and walk
On penitential thorns, and wander forth
From place to place along the wilderness,
To expiate my heart-engrain'd deep stains.
But who are these who from th' Egyptian sea
Come forth, with palms and garments wash'd in blood?
Ah, I, like you, from that dark prison-house
Once pass'd, and from Egyptian bondage freed
Was led between the walls of hanging seas:
But now shut out from Canaan's holy rest,
Look on the shrines of my true heritance,
And wander round but cannot enter in.
How has my heart disloyal travers'd back
Beyond the waves of my Baptismal birth,
Where yonder the Egyptian city lies,
Beneath the curse of God; yon shining towers
Of Pharaoh's house, where Satan holds his court!
Those walls are figures of this evil world,
Where, as in his own temple, Satan sits,
Maker of phantoms and the sire of lies,—
And worldly men there worship him; and then
From smoke and glare of sacrificial fumes,
He forms bright vanities and shadowy shapes,

To mould fit guerdons for his worshippers,
Prince of the air: and still their eyes before
Brings an unreal show to mock the sense,
Illusive forms to cheat each age of life,—
A sky unreal and unreal earth,—
A gold that glitters but which is not gold,—
A rain that waters but which fosters not,—
Unfaithful rainbows shining to deceive,—
Phantoms of beauty,—beck'ning forms of love,
Holding unreal converse, as in dreams,
All form'd of smoke and shadow, empty shades!
These paint before our path a golden Heaven,
And setting suns with braided beauteous clouds,
Cities of sapphire, bowers of amaranth,
A many-gated Heaven come down to man,
Where shining Angels walk the glittering streets:
Till Day-spring breaks, then suddenly appears
A burning Sodom with its fiery walls.

When the heart turns to God the vision flies,
And in the place of such false paradise
Dire faces come to view, and hostile shapes,
Dragging the captive soul away to flames.
O vain assemblage of deluding shapes,
Strange mockeries of good in God's own world,
Fram'd by the Evil One! while here below
All things are Thine, O Lord of our new birth,
And shadow forth realms of immortal Truth,
Semblance and pledge of sure reality,
While we for substance catch at empty shades!

Thence as from fire-doom'd Sodom I would flee:
Open thy gates, thou Zoar 'neath the hills,
For by the road the awful pillar stands
Of her that doubted—turning back her eyes.
I seek thy sheltering refuge by the way,
The house of penitence; for my weak knees
Cannot unto the mountain further go.

Ye of the house where stern Repentance dwells,
Pity a pilgrim who doth come to lay
His unstanch'd sorrows in your pitying breast!
The porter who doth hold your strong-barr'd gates,
The meek-brow'd child of truth, Humility,
Doth gaze and knows him not, a stranger there,
And turns the key; then I will strip me bare
Of these my worldly weeds and marks of pride,
That scare me from the gate where Wisdom dwells.

O Thou the true the good Samaritan,
The Keeper who dost slumber not nor sleep,
I from Thine own the true Jerusalem,
With Thy protecting mountains girded round,
Have wander'd down into this lower world,
To Jericho, that city of the moon,
That city of the valleys 'neath the curse,—
And wounded by the way-side dying lay.
Thy Priest and Levite give me no relief,
Nor stretch the hand, but pass unheeding by.
Wilt Thou not on Thy heavenly journey bend,
And come down in Thy creature's guise, on us
To look with brotherly and human eyes?

If not unto Thy Salem of the hills,
Wherein Thy blessed Saints and Angels dwell,
Is there no Inn by the celestial road,
Wherein a wounded man may find repose?
Thou bidd'st the heavy-laden come to Thee,
Thou lookest out, and hastenest on the way
To meet the poor returning prodigal.
My sins are more in number than the sands,
More than the sands Thy mercies are to me:
Yea, though my sins are deep as Hell beneath,
Thy pity is more ample than the Heavens.
I count Thy words of promise, Thou hast set
Seventy-times seven the measure of our love,
What then shall be the measure of Thine own,
But seven times seventy,—Sabbath-days of Heaven?
Infinite is Thy patience as the Sea,
The Sea of Baptism, sea without a shore;
Thy love is as unbounded as the sky,
Reflected in the waves of that calm sea.
The body of this death doth hem me round,
No part of my whole frame is freed from sin,
No part of Thine is free from bleeding wounds.
Thy Spirit griev'd to see me leagu'd with death,
Let him not take his everlasting flight:
With fasting and with prayer and painful alms,
Still let me strive to hold and win Thy stay.
Can mothers e'er forget their dear birth-pangs?
I am the child of Thine own bitter pains.
Thou once hast wash'd me with Thine heart's own blood;

Thou since hast often wash'd me with Thy tears;
And drops will wear at length the rocky stone;
Thy promise is to open if I knock,
Yea, Thou Thyself hast knock'd at my dull heart;
By warning—by Thy mercies—by Thy grace—
But I have still refused to let Thee in.
Close not against me the eternal door,
Although my hand is palsied; and in vain
Would I assay to lift it to the door,
But Thou didst heal Thyself the palsied hand.
And now within Thy calm and holy grove
I fain would hasten on the road of Heaven;
Guide me to haunts of lowly penury,
That I may cast aside my worldly wealth,
And gird my loins with holier hope; and now
Lead me to bowers of lowly Abstinence,
And Heavenly Contemplation; further still
And nearer to Thy holy mount, where Prayer
Kneels at her orisons, and gentle gales
Breathe of new hope, and Angel-harps are heard;
At sound of which o'er my regretful heart
There shall awake remembrance of past years,
And flow afresh, flow forth my bitter tears.
In that deep grove replete with airs of Heaven,
Where Abstinence dwells, and Charity, and Prayer,
I would approach Thy portals, but therein
I hear no sounds of sweet Angelic hymns,
But a still voice in the dead silent night;
Be dark, ye Heavens, and black, ye Heavenly gates;

Your child hath left the fountains of true life,
For broken cisterns, and now dies of thirst!
The lions of the forest stood amaz'd
At one that leaveth Thee, the living Font,
For way of Egypt and th' Assyrian stream[c].
Be dark, ye Heavens, be closed, eternal doors!
A famish'd Syrian, sitting at Death's gate,
My father was when Thou didst take me up[d].
Long in the Egyptian furnace did I dwell,
But Thou on feather'd plumes hast borne me thence,
And set me here to till Thy blissful land:
And when I should my first-fruits bring to Thee,
A serpent in the basket hidden lies;
I bring Thee nought but silence and my tears.
Thy mercies and Thy warnings came to me,
And fain would lead me to th' eternal house,
But now on time's fleet wings have hurried by.
The arrow of Thy vengeance drinks my blood,
And one good Angel now alone remains,
Penitence, wrapp'd in mourning weeds and woe.
And if to her I cleave, walk her sad ways,
And kneel in prayer without th' eternal gates,
The rays through Heaven's dark portals shall break forth,
And sounds be heard of blissful melodies,
In soft and soothing distance sadly sweet,
From Heavenly courts where Angels tune their harps,
Rejoicing o'er one sinner that repents:—

[c] Jer. ii. 15. 18.
[d] Deut. xxvi. 5.

Songs of immortal joy, all sadly sweet
As thoughts of Heaven in penitential woes!
And at the sound of those relenting harps,
Again o'er my forgetful silent heart
Shall wake the sad remembrance of past years,
And flow afresh, flow forth my bitter tears.

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IMAGE THE NINTH.

Disengage thyself from the evil habit which besets thee, and thou shalt find light.

Art thou still hesitating, and yet desirous to render thy heart more zealous in the attainment of holiness? Consider as in God's presence what advice thou wouldst seriously give thy friend in such a case [A]; and do thou thyself the same. But if Vice holdeth thee back [B], disentangle thyself from her, and especially if she be united with any old evil Habit [C], which formeth a cord around thee, like that of a stern necessity, and which commencing in a thread increases till it becomes a cable. And then follow thy guardian Angel to all good, and along the straight road of life remember the advice of Christ, by pursuing it with Simplicity [D], and with Prudence [E], which qualities are denoted in Holy Scripture by the Dove and the Serpent. Watch for some Occasion [F] of working out thy salvation. Consider the figures and symbols which surround thee in the world, which may tend to represent Virtue [G] to thy thoughts, either by simile or by contrast. For to do this the Lord Jesus [H] hath taught us by His Parables, such as that of the Good Shepherd [I], of the Sower [K], of the Vine [L], of the prodigal Son [M]. By which mode of teaching He hath made all nature to be eloquent to us in the things of salvation.

Habit Moulding Chains.

Reef after reef upon its ocean bed
The coral branches forth, and lifts its head,
More and more spreads around its woodland caves,
Emerging like a palace from the waves,
Hard'ning and redd'ning in each growing cell,
Fit haunt for fabled spirit there to dwell;—
Fair-roof'd abodes, crystalline cells and floors,
Where shells and living things, old Ocean's stores,
Take varied hues and put on mailèd form,
Gathering their strength and beauty from the storm.
And yet the while it hath no root on earth,
But feeds on air and sea from whence its birth.
Thus habits mould the soul to be a place,
Wherein may dwell forms of immortal grace;
While thoughts and tempers in the spirit's shrine
Grow into shape, and take the life divine;—
Born and uprais'd from the Baptismal sea,
And drinking Heaven—elastic, stainless, free.

Branch after branch the Banyan tree gives birth
To daughter arms, that downward seek the earth,

Whose envious branches make a mid-day gloom,
And hide the sun;—dun—silent as the tomb,
A life-destroying, gloom-embowering cave,
A temple for dark spirits of the grave.
Thus evil habits wreathe their snakes around,
With elephantine trunks that love the ground,
And form a sullen shield against the sky,
Hiding from all the soul Heaven's genial eye:
Where sinful passions brood, and range the shade,
And hide them in the gloom themselves have made.
Say, shall the dusky Ethiop change his skin?
Then he that long hath sinn'd shall cease from sin.
And shall the dappled leopard lose his spots?
Then time shall wear away the sinner's blots.
With changing life we change through our short span,
Yet still "the boy is father of the man;"
In alter'd lineaments the same we trace,
And in the man behold the stripling's face.
First soft and flexible ourselves we mould,
Then cold and harden'd the sure impress hold;
See the fresh youth alive to breath of blame,
Soft as the air to catch the tinge of shame;
He laughs at vice, decrying virtue's pains,—
Now look again, his spirit is in chains.
Or if his will hath wrought the mastery,
It hath regain'd the reins, and now is free.
As we advance a silent hand we find,
A form unseen is pulling from behind;
In ways and thoughts of weakness and of wrong,

Threads turn to cords, and cords to cables strong,
Till Habit hath become our Destiny,
Which drives us on, and shakes her scourge on high.
Stumbling when we our heavenly course would run,
Caught in the meshes we ourselves have spun,
Then knowing not the cause we feel a chain
Withholding, and of outward things complain.
Of fate,—foreknowledge,—nails by Nature driven,—
Of stern necessity,—and power of Heaven,—
Of head's formation,—all constraining will,—
Of inborn evil,—power invincible;
Alas, our folly doth divine too well
Of Satan's power, and wreathèd toils of hell,
As if the mandate had gone forth in doom,
"Bind hand and foot, and take him to the gloom."
The will is moulded warm, but hard remains,
And is upon the heart with iron chains;
And sin, within the seat of conscience wrought,
Brings in her teeming brood of evil thought;
Those thoughts of evil still unbid return,
Till through the veins the secret fevers burn;
While every avenue lies open still,
And from each scene lets in the taint of ill.
Then let thine Angel seize thee by the hand,
And lead thee onward to a happier land,
While thou art able yet to hear his call,
Ere bound within by Passion's secret thrall.
And know thy Heaven-ward pathway to descry,
There is no guide like sweet Simplicity,

The serpent's wisdom, manhood's worldly sense,
Can boast no light like dove-like innocence.
Nay, serpent's wisdom, manhood's sense, combin'd
Are found in child-like innocence of mind.
For love on earth, in things unearthly wise,
Doth of the desert make a paradise;
Wherein the child doth with the lion stray,
The serpent and the dove together play.
Thus death to life, and night to day-light turns,
And round thy feet the light of duty burns,
While purity keeps watch at every pore,
And 'gainst each evil phantom shuts the door.
Behold how Mammon's child through earth and sky
Weighs all, unconscious, with a practis'd eye,
To something of prophetic sight attains,
While finger upon finger counts his gains:
How keen to scape all loss, all store to hold!
He deems nought pleasant but what turns to gold.
Thus Love divine looks round with eager eyes,
Transmuting all things to her growing prize,
Her task on earth is treasure in the skies.
And now Occasion calls thee with her glass,
Wherein thy sands are number'd as they pass;
Ere it hath flown seize now the fleeting hour;
Each hour may break a link of Satan's power;
Each hour one Heavenward step may thee advance,
For good or evil may the next enhance;
Till Virtue meet thee, fair as star of even,
And her own light and liberty hath given.

How sweet the ways of Wisdom early gain'd,
Growing with growth, and strength by strength attain'd,
As higher heights and broader ways expand,
A freer air more near th' immortal land,
More treasure stor'd in Heaven! Then Habit's might
Gives armour, makes the yoke and burden light,
When with spontaneous spring the heart ascends
In prayer to Heaven, in prayer begins and ends;
Till custom shall to nature's strength attain,
Duty her present joy, her future gain,
Opening a wider path in green old age,
Strewed with calm hopes of her high heritage.

Then Wisdom's self, descending from the sky,
Shall train thy heart to glad philosophy;
And Christ Himself upon the way appears,
In things of Heaven to school thine eyes and ears:
To walk with thee as erst with them of old,
And all the world around thee to unfold.
The scene to worldlings where their glory dies,
The grave wherein their hope in ruin lies,
Becomes replete with pictures ever new,
Presenting Heavenly lessons to the view;—
Portraying things of our immortal birth,
As evening clouds oft shadow things of earth,
Obscure and transient, yet as by they sail,
There the full heart reads many a solemn tale;
Each object seen becomes a speaking sign,
Which with a finger points to things divine,
A mirror wherein things celestial pass,
Eternity disclosed as in a glass.

For if Christ is within, enshrin'd in light,
From all without, from like or opposite,
From scenes we meet, or by the way behold,
He forms His parable, as erst of old,
Giving the seeing eye and hearing ear,
And heart to understand His presence near;
Till all around our life shall find a tongue,
And witnesses of God our pathway throng.
Then Nature all becomes a living book,
Wherein the eyes of Faith for ever look,
And see a Father's love, a Father's care,
And the eternal kingdom rising there.
Then she walks forth 'neath Heaven's o'erhanging light,
And reads the glorious tidings brought to sight,
And carries on her holy orison
Through all His works in sacred shrines begun.
Read we in learned lore of rural scene?
Or range the moor and mount, and pause between;
Where fleecy wanderers browze the sunny hill,
Or bleating drink of the dark winding rill,—
While by the sidelong path and jutting rock,
The shepherd hastens down to aid his flock?
That watchful guide, and wolf that prowls at eve,
When thoughts of evil the weak bosom grieve,
Shall speak of guardian love in dangers nigh—
The Shepherd ready for His sheep to die;
On mountain sides and wilds all bleak and bare,
Sweet are such lessons of His gentle care;
On wind and wave His presence seems to brood,
Till that lone sheep-moor is not solitude.

Then let me pass along to cultur'd plains;
Lo, in destruction gay the charnock reigns,
The proud usurper o'er the waving corn,
Sharing soft dews, and rains, and rays of morn.
Alas, in Christ's own kingdom all unseen,
The footsteps of the deadly fiend have been:
Such are bad thoughts in the untutor'd breast;
Such the bad men that break the Church's rest.
Thus e'en in sorrows we discern the sign,
And read in works of men Thy truth divine;
Read Thine own lessons, and no more repine,
But haply gain therein a thought of care,
Of sleepers—and the harvest—and the tare.

Or shall we wander forth to southern skies?
There Wisdom still shall bear her Heaven-taught eyes,
Where creeps from branch to branch the hanging vine,
And fair festoons with clustering grapes entwine.
Sweeter than fragrant dews and genial air,
Breathe o'er that beauteous scene the thoughts of prayer.
O wondrous truth of awful mystery,
Are we the branches that bear fruit in Thee?
All one with Thee, by Thee, in Thee abide,
Planted in Thee, and growing from Thy side,
Thyself in us—we not ourselves but Thine,
Form'd of and in one new mysterious Vine!
Our better thoughts—our works—are all Thine own,
Thou spread'st Thyself in us, in us art grown,—
Bearing Thy fruit in us, Thyself our fruit,—
Thyself expanding in each living shoot.

Grow, glorious Vine, around our homely halls,
Spreading Thine arms about our peaceful walls;
Type of that Heavenly Bride whose living grace
Clasps our poor homes with her serene embrace;
With sheltering arms around and costly dower,
Drinking the airs of Heaven, and sun, and shower.

Nor shall the hills and vales that breathe of Heaven,
And vines, and setting suns, and rays of even,
Alone speak Thy blest language, but the walls
Of crowded cities echo back Thy calls;
Heard stilly amid rude suburban cells,
And thickly-peopled towns, where luxury dwells.
There haply some fond parent's aching breast,
Looks for a long-lost child in sad unrest,
Watching the distance in his lone abode,
Where opes the window to the mountain road,
Or hastes to meet the wanderer on the wild,
And Justice yields to Mercy reconcil'd.
Thus yearning Nature speaks a parent's love,
And this is Pity such as dwells above:
So when sad Memory sinks in guilty fears,
Such emblem of Thy love shall move his tears,
And urge to rise and seek a Father's face,
Who hastes to hold him in his fond embrace.

Thus when the heart, from fleshly bonds made free,
Attains to that immortal liberty,
The spirit of adoption shall make wise,
And clothe the world with her own mysteries.
The Spirit which made all things gives to read
In His own works below His living creed.

Then as we walk abroad, in singing bird
A Father's care is seen, His praise is heard;
And lilies in their sweet and dewy nest,
Speak of more radiant hues that shall invest
The earth-soil'd soul, which while it hastes to die
Is cloth'd afresh with immortality.
While withering flowers, which bloom but to decay,
Leave seeds that shall abide the harvest-day:
And labouring ants still teach us at our feet
Of Heavenly stores, and sure unseen retreat.
Soul-lighting Wisdom, unto whom is given,
To find on earth a shadow of thy heaven,
Purge from the dross of sin my feeble sight,
That I thy blessed lore may read aright!

X

IMAGE THE TENTH.

Be careful of thine actions, and regulate them as in the presence of God, to the glory of His great Name.

Consider what things thou hast to do during this day, and at this very hour [A]; and in like manner as if thou wert running in a race, direct all thy works [B] and all thy steps to the goal, that is to say, to the glory of God,—with a burning heart [C]. And be assured of this, that without the Grace of God thou art utterly helpless, and canst do nothing [D]. Pray therefore for this Grace, and do all thy works as in weight, number, and measure [E]; and not otherwise than if Death were following close behind thee [F]; and an Angel [G] and an Evil Spirit [H] were watchfully observing thee by the way, and all thy actions. Moreover do all thy works in such a manner [I] as if thy grave were already being dug for thee [K]. Nor this only, but perform all thy actions after the example of Christ and His Saints [L], that they may be such as the Angels [M] may bear and offer before God. But above all things consider always and remember this, that God [N], and the company of Heaven, are at all times beholding thee.

Actions written in Heaven.

O'ER our thoughtless heads aloof,
Hangs the Heaven's o'erarching roof;
Distinct therein our shadows pass,
As in a molten looking-glass.
And around in silence dread,
All unseen above our head,
Like an amphitheatre,
Stand the Angelic inmates there,
Watching how we do our part,
Hands and feet and wandering heart.
In the awful stillness then
Comes the Angel up from men,
With the incense from afar,
Brought from this our fallen star;
In the watches of the sky,
Before the dreadful majesty.
Emerald gates and golden street,
Where the shining inmates fleet,
Meeting pass and passing meet,

Wandering by the jasper wall!
Yet in solemn stillness all
Watch around our little ball;
Ninety-nine those folds of day
Watch for one that's gone astray.
  And more things than here we know
Are around us e'en below,
For the Heavenly tabernacle
Hath come down with man to dwell;
Ways of varied providence
Greater than the things of sense,
Like a world beneath the sea
In the realms of phantasy.
Fancy's key to my wild theme
Opes the door as to a dream.
  Through the ivory gate of sleep,
Lo, I pass'd into that deep,
Where Truth strips the outward show,
Bathing things that are below
With her light, and opes the eyes
To unseen realities.
By the road which mortals trod,
Leading to their long abode,
Sat an Angel with a scroll,
And men's deeds did there enrol,
Like a bird upon a tree,
So unseen and silently.
  There an evil spirit too
With his record came to view,

Like a reptile by the way,
Which unmark'd doth watch his prey.
  Then were writ the deeds of men,
With a diamond-pointed pen,
On a plate of adamant,
For eternity to chant.
  With me went a child of air,
Like a little maiden fair,
The expanse of whose blue eye,
Passion's billow ne'er had woke,
Nor the face of Heaven had broke,
Mirror'd there so tranquilly.
  Starry gates we pass'd, and then
Came to scenes where mortal men
Of the cup of being quaff:—
Doors flew open to his staff,—
"Heard ye not that evil laugh?"
Said the Angel as we past,
"It is writ and it shall last,
Dipp'd in colours of the heart,
Nor from his own doom shall part.
Hark! that word of injur'd love!
It is syllabled above,
And Angelic courts among,
It doth find a trumpet-tongue.
See the guests at yonder board!
Many is the passing word,
But the secrets of the breast
There are veil'd—yet manifest

They as shapes embodied stand,
In the sky's more stable strand.
There is one in silence there,
Unmark'd, unheeded; by his care,
And the words his heart express'd,
He shall be an Angel's guest.
Beams from the sun his head shall borrow,
And his feet tread stars to-morrow.
Look, how black Heaven's shadow falls
On the loveliest in those halls!
Now to other scenes away
Through the courts of night and day,
Hear'st thou now those melodies?
Stop thine ears full quick, for Hell
Doth to them in chorus swell,
Loves and battles are their theme."
Then we pass'd as in a dream.
"Now to other scenes away,
Through the courts of night and day,
Now we breathe a lighter air,
We are near the haunts of prayer."
Then I saw a little child
Singing hymns in morning mild:—
"Those pure notes," said he, "to hear,
Heaven itself doth lend an ear."
Then we pass'd, and Evening's gleam
Came upon my fancy's theme.
"Who is that in yonder cell?"
"Contemplation there doth dwell,

Like a hermit in his shed."
"Who doth yonder lift his head,
Working by yon sunny hill,
Where the sunbeam lingers still?
One busy at his trade I ween."
"'Tis Time, who digs thy grave unseen,
For he sees, that on thy race
Death doth follow thee apace,
And anon from place to place
Gains upon thee every hour,
Gathering something of thy power.
Close his spectral shape I see,
Ghastly grim anatomy."
Then I cried, "What things most true
Thy stern mirror brings to view,
All around, though hid from sense,
Peopled with intelligence!
Nothing seems unreal here,
Save what worldlings hope and fear.
O'er a gulf I seem to pass,
On a bridge of brittle glass;
I would hide me from the crowd,
If it might but be allow'd,
To the hermit's cell to steal,
Or at altars ever kneel:
And with Contemplation dwell,
Heeding things of Heaven and Hell."
"Nay," said he, "where duty lies,
There is highest sacrifice;

Oft in lowliest tasks on earth
Faith doth shew her genuine birth,
Giving them immortal worth;
And with incense fills the urn,
Which before the Throne doth burn.
All around His temple is,
Here whate'er is done is His,
Therefore all things 'neath the skies
Are replete with auguries.
'Holiness unto the Lord'
Marks the staff, the scrip, the board,
Harp, and spade, and book, and sword,—
All the Royal Priesthood use,—
Faith in all doth worth infuse.
'Tis God's temple all around,
Upon all His Name is found;
It is the great Sabbath Day,
Lit by the great Morning's ray;
In the things that meanest lie
Hideth best Humility;
And the varied minds of men,
And the varied virtues, when
They are lit by holy Love,
Lustrous are as gems above;
Each with its own colour dight,
All replete with living light;
Unto each its hue is given,
Varied as those stones of Heaven.
Love which, like an Angel's sight,

Sees all things divinely bright,
And each duty fills with rays,
Fairer than the chrysoprase.
Lagging hours they seem to linger,
Yet thus each may have a finger,
Whereby it may point to Heaven;
While the lengthening shades of even
On life's dial fall, and now
Darker shadows round thee go,
Yet thy works may pass before,
Waiting thee,—a blessed store,—
In their number, weight, and measure,
Laid up in enduring treasure."
Then there pass'd an Angel mild,
Like a flaxen-hairèd child,
Singing sweet in accents wild—
"Here, where darkness o'er thee lies,
Great the boon, in Wisdom's eyes,
In the steps of Saints to tread,
Like the stars above thy head!"
Then another answering cried,
"In this scene where man is tried,
Great the boon to mortal given,
To follow Christ the Lord of Heaven.
While His footsteps still dispense
Bright and hallow'd effluence;
Fair as the illumined moon
Lighting up the midnight noon."
Then I heard another song,

"Though the way be dark and long,
Think of them that now on high
Have attain'd the victory.
In a moment it is past,
And the endless die is cast."
Oh, how little mortals deem
What a deep absorbing theme
Are the feeble days they spend,
In the worlds that have no end!
Meanwhile Heaven above our head,
Watches us in silence dread;
Solemn awe and stillness lies
On those vast societies.
While the Angels stand around,
Breathless in suspense profound,
Looking down on human life,
With its mirth and with its strife;
And the deeds of mortal men
Pass into that mirror's ken.
In that place where time is not,
Things that are on earth forgot
Take their place, and ever dwell
Set in calm unspeakable,
And enshrined in silence stay
To abide the dreadful Day.
All is light, and stillness all,
Like an ice-bound waterfall,
Where the waves, all bright and hoar,
Seem to pass, and be no more,

But there fix'd in durance dwell,
Solid and unmoveable.
  Ice-chain'd in its headlong tract
Have I seen a cataract,
Caught, as by a magic spell,
Like a downward falling well,
All throughout a wintry noon,
Hanging in the silent moon;
All throughout a sun-bright even,
Like the sapphire gate of Heaven.
Spray and wave, and drippings frore,
For a hundred feet and more,
As the river swift descended,
There in middle air suspended,
Deep ravines around it blended.
Icicles, and hanging flake,
From a bridge[a], and rock, and brake,
And the woodland's snowy tress,
In its pensive loveliness,
O'er them hung, in silent trance
Witnessing their headlong dance
Caught in air, there to remain
Bound in Winter's crystal chain;
Like a spell-bound falling main;
All above still silence sleeps,
While in the transparent deeps
Far below the current creeps.
  Thus methought men's actions here,

[a] The Devil's Bridge, Cardiganshire.

In their headlong full career,
Were passing into adamant,
Hopes and fears, love, hate, and want,
And the thoughts like shining spray,
Which above their pathway play,
Standing in the eye of day,
In the changeless Heavenly noon,—
Things done here beneath the moon.
  Thus above our heads aloof
Hangs the Heaven's o'erarching roof,
And upon the golden strand
Angels round in stillness stand,
And behold our actions pass
Into the transparent glass.

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IMAGE THE ELEVENTH.

Attend to the benefits which God confers upon thee, by which thou art stimulated to holiness.

Consider the blessings with which God invites thee to virtue; that of Creation [A], that of our Lord's Incarnation [B], that of Redemption [C], those of Sacraments and Graces [D]. For it is God that feeds thee and clothes thee [E], delivers thee from many evils and miseries [F], and by His Angels sendeth His gifts [G], as He did of old upon the Israelites [H]. It is God who giveth thee showers [I], and sunshine [K], and increase of fruits for thy use and delight [L], and these He bestoweth upon thee in order that thou mayest follow Virtue [M]. And since God doeth all these things out of His very great Charity [N], wilt thou not also in thy turn be melted with love? Surely although Virtue be of itself lovely, and vice detestable, yet independently of these considerations it were but reasonable that we should embrace Virtue from the love of God and our Lord, and on account of those blessings with which He hath prevented us.

Man encompassed with Blessings.

Lord, what is man that Thou shouldst own,
And like a guest shouldst visit him;—
With Thine own loving-kindness crown,
And set him with Thy Seraphim.
Thou from the dust didst give him birth,
And pointing upward from dull earth
Awaken to Thine orison,
Creation's Heir and Priest, Thine everlasting Son.

And then began the wondrous strife,
Man to heap up his deeds of ill,
Thou to outdo with gifts of life,
And overcome him with goodwill.
Then came the tempest and the cloud,
Deep unto deep then call'd aloud—
Thy depth of love, our depth of woe,—
The deep of Heaven above—the deep of Hell below.

Bow down your heads, ye ancient mountains!
Heaven bends to earth her place of rest;
Flow back unto your source, ye fountains,
And stand in wonder at your Guest!
Lo, in a Virgin's solitude
The harbinger of glory stood,
Open, ye portals of the morn,
That from your dewy womb Love may Himself be born.

Heap up ye mountains upon mountains,
The growing mountains of men's crimes!
Flow on—flow on ye tainted fountains,
The gather'd evil of all times!
Lo, man in league with Satan stands,
Both bring on their embattled bands;
But God fights with His clemency,
And hath o'ercome them all on the accursed Tree.

Trine visitation of th' Unseen,
Be graven in us; in us dwell,
In Sacramental Grace serene,
The Heaven-reveal'd Immanuel;
The Child within the bosom found,
Who hath the sun His brows around!
'Tis He of David bears the keys,
And in the things of earth unlocks Heaven's mysteries.

And now, thou heir of sin and woe,
Come forth, and see this blue-roof'd hall!

From Heaven above, from earth below,
What varied blessings rise and fall?
While through the opening gates of morn
His bounties are in silence borne,
In stillness as of Angel's wings,
Save where the bird of morn his grateful descant sings.

The night is past, and with it gone
The wandering shapes of ill that crept
Around us, and to us unknown
Have look'd upon us while we slept,
Like dismal faces in the gloom,
Through windows of th' illumin'd room;
Some guard unseen drives them afar,
As on night's scatter'd rear breaks forth the Eastern star.

And now let some sweet guide be found
To lead us forth, and point abroad,
How we are on the narrow road
By cords of sweet compulsion bound.
There are on all the ties of Love
To draw us to her house above.
Though sense sees not the sacred band,
We feel there is on all a soft-constraining Hand.

It is as if through fields of air
We saw the bright-wing'd pursuivant,
Sent down by that all-seeing Care
Which hears, and answers every want.

Yea, finding answers to our needs,
While no seen form from Thee proceeds,
We feel it is Thyself art here,
Art present to our love, art present to our fear.

The Sun Thou daily sendest forth,
With varied blessings manifold,
To turn to verdure the dead earth,
To turn her verdure into gold,—
Seems like Thy torch to lead us on
To worlds far better than his own;
And for his Maker asks our love,
And daily doth withdraw our coldness to reprove.

The steers that toil in furrow'd field,—
On mountain sides the waving grain,—
The vine that hangs her purple shield,—
The fatness-dropping genial rain,—
And Nature's self that finds a voice,
And all the hills which round rejoice,
With woods and verdant spots between,
All speak around our homes the steps of the Unseen.

When musing on celestial things
Fairer than what we here behold,
From birds we give them buoyant wings,
And human face of fairest mould;
This wall of sense that bars us round,
Doth thus our very fancy bound:

Nor can we deem their matchless grace
To be with us unseen, but in some distant place.

Haply some new diviner sense
The spirit's portals might unbar,
And ope to us Omnipotence;
Not distant as the twinkling star,
But in such unknown radiance
As might th' immortal soul entrance,
Yet nearer than our very breath:
And what if this which opes the door of sense—be Death!

Then think of God, and walk in fear
Of all that doth thy fancy stir,
Whate'er doth meet thine eye and ear,
Look on it as His messenger:
In this bad world wherein we dwell,
Who grasp at Heaven shall find it Hell:
The sun lights up dark clouds to shew
That that which gleams most bright is but a cloud below.

Whate'er may be Thy messenger,
His lesson will I strive to learn,
Yea, though some rudest shape he wear,
And though his voice be sad and stern;
Yea, though he speak occasions gone,
And dread Remorse be in the tone,
Him would I cherish in Thy Name,
And for Thy sake would love, crown'd King of woe and shame.

Fair as the shining gate of even,
Comes Virtue down the sun-pav'd road,
Bright in the panoply of Heaven,
To lead us to that calm abode;
For this God spreads His bounties o'er,
Alike embracing rich and poor,
Blue skies above, green scenes below,
'Tis all that we might strive the better path to know.

Thus to enlighten dull-eyed man,
He trains him through the things of sense,
The scenes of varied life to scan,
And read aright His providence;
Home to his heart this truth to press,
He school'd him in the wilderness,
When Angels oped the Heavenly door,
And daily rain'd below the life-supporting store.

Fair Form, that sittest on the cloud,
The image of parental love,
And from the purple-folding shroud
To earth descendest from above,
With babes enfolded in thine arms,
As sheltering them from worldly harms;
All things are weak to speak of thee,
And figure thy fair form, divinest Charity.

How can we paint thee to our eyes?
Thy brow is like the radiant morn,

Thy flowing robes are azure skies,
And stars the gems thy robes adorn,
The vernal cloud thy chariot fair,
The winds the steeds that chariot bear,
The hues on evening clouds that roam
Are but the radiant gate that leads unto thy home.

If thou art fair with God above,
And fairer than all things below,
Bath'd in thy light, immortal Love,
Let our heart burn, our footsteps glow,
With emulous haste our feet be shod
To love our neighbour and our God:
For Action is the heart's own door,
Whereby Affection comes, and gathers in her store.

XII

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Credo
Diligis
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IMAGE THE TWELFTH.

Practise thyself in meditating on holy doctrines, and take for an example the mystery of the Nativity.

Prepare thyself, and then select some subject for meditation, as that of the Nativity [A]. Portray this, as a painter would do, in a heart [B] which Peace [C] sustains, that is to say in a heart which is in tranquillity and at peace. Consider it with all its circumstances. First of all, who it is that is born [D]. Secondly, what it is which is said or done on that occasion, and in what manner [E]. Thirdly, where, and when it is [F]. Fourthly, why and for what end [G], namely, that Adam and the human race might be rescued from death. Fifthly, collect inducements out of each of these particulars, to the practice of some Virtue [H]. As thou mayest perceive that from each little chart in these delineations, there is a ray of light extending to Virtue. Now take hold of some Occasion [I], whereon thou mayest exercise this virtue; and shew thy detestation for the opposite Vice [K]. Moreover, while engaged in this contemplation, stir up thyself to the affections, of Gratitude [L], of Joy [M], of Admiration [N], of Compassion [O]. Wherever thou art, exercise Faith, Hope, and Charity [P], deriving them in prayer from above. And observe how in all this subject of our meditation, Virtue [Q] shineth forth and is taught in mystery. And now consider the particulars of doctrine or precept [R], which are set before thee by the Divine Teacher in that holy seat of His instructions, the Mount of the Beatitudes; and endeavour practically to follow that Virtue [S], which they would point out to thee.

The Birth of Christ in the peaceful heart.

Sweet Peace, with brow with olive crown'd,
Thou art no name of vain pretence,
That charms the ear but mocks the sense,
But sure as God's own word art found,
Watching around the heart, on thee
Stay'd in unfailing charity.
The heart that is the cradle meet,
Of pure affections the calm seat,
Wherein th' eternal Child is born
Whose face is the celestial Morn.
The painter labours to impart
More than the magic of his art
Around that unimagin'd birth,
Rifles the hidden haunts of earth,
And o'er the scene strives to infuse
An immortality of hues.
Oh, that to me there might be given
A pencil dipp'd in hues of Heaven,
In living colours to enrol
Upon the tablet of the soul,

And so to frame that portraiture,
As might in Paradise endure.
Grain'd in affection's glowing dyes,
Such as Angelic eyes might read,
Who gaze upon, and long to tread
The depth of those great mysteries.
Till graver thoughts of Duty, won
From Heaven-wrapt contemplation,
Glass'd in the bosom undefiled
Reveal the sky-descending Child;
The immortal beaming of whose brow
Lights Heaven above, and earth below,
With infant temples blazing bright
In golden-hairèd cloud of light,
Till full-arm'd Virtue into birth
Awakens, and on this bad earth
Goes forth, and with Occasion join'd
Gains something of th' unearthly mind,
Shot like the lightning from that Face,
One ray of which is deathless grace.
Yea, as I gaze upon the scene,
And would portray it, though unseen,
I seem beneath my feet to tread
That monster of the living dead,
Till in my fancy 'tis allowed
To walk upon the earthly cloud,
Upward to rise with love, and see
A ray of immortality.
  Lo, now the deep-soul'd orison
A speaking shape and form hath won,

Nor shall the Poet's glowing art
Her sister leave to take her part,
And unattended there to wait,
The handmaid of Divinity.
And well I love that poet wild[a]
Who oft would paint Thee as a child,—
A Child with more than Angel's ken
Mixing among the things of men,
With warning dread and sweet control,
And more than manhood in Thy soul:—
With this huge world of sea and land
A ball within Thine infant hand.

Thus comest Thou in this our pride,
To lay Thy glorious robe aside,
Great in Thy Godhead, for our sake
This manhood's gentlest form to take,
Calling us round to plead with Thee,
Dreadful in Thy humility.

Great is Thy Godhead, yet a child,
So by Thee be my spirit fill'd,
A little child that helpless lies,
Bound round by our infirmities.

A little child of one day old,
Laid in a manger dark and cold;
Whom Heaven of Heavens cannot contain,
Nor years eternal bound Thy reign!

[a] Francis Quarles, to whom may be added Herman Hugo, from whom his Emblems are taken.

Of Thee we cannot choose but speak,
Yet speaking feel all words are weak;
One word speaks all—Immanuel,—
Whose love is Heaven, whose wrath is Hell.
A little Child from Heavenly land
Low bending down, and from the height,
Hanging precipitous in sight,
Holding mankind with mighty hand,
Saved from an unseen gulf beneath,
And lifted from the grasp of death.
In that sweet vision manifest,
In all He does His infant breast
Hath shot a ray that grows not old,
But maketh our weak virtue bold,
Saving, and teaching blinded man,
Thyself the good Samaritan.
But how shall we portray the scene,
Blending the things that might have been,
With thoughts found meet to speak th' Unseen?
For Heaven and earth there seem to meet,
And open the eternal seat.
Though dark and silent is the room,
The painter and the poet's skill
With other inmates strive to fill,
And all the darkness to illume,—
Ashamed of poor humanity
Before the Maker of the sky.
The homely scene they fain would dress
Grieved at the cold and nakedness;

They bring around that wondrous birth
Whate'er of good is found on earth,
And from all hues in Fancy's store
Living illumination pour.
Yet rather to the scene be given
The silence of that hour in Heaven.
For what can speak the Infinite?
And what can paint the wondrous light,
Where brighter than ten thousand suns
The stream of burning glory runs
Around His brow, whose viewless glow
To endless worlds doth life bestow?
But if the painter needs must speak,
And poet too would silence break,
We there would paint a Heavenly crown,
Opening above, Heaven's Lord to own,
And in dread stillness coming down[b].
O scene mysterious of all time
What thought can match the dread sublime,
Of that the meek reality?
When howling winter hurried by,
And sang Thy birth-night lullaby;
And hungry beasts were prowling round,
In the dead midnight hour profound?
The horned ox is standing by,
And idly feeding without fear,
Looks coldly on, he knows not why,
Nor conscious feels his Maker nigh.

[b] See Image the twelfth.

The lamb too lies there bound and dead,
Significance divinely meant,
That life of man must needs be fed,
On death of the meek innocent!
Thus winter's sound and midnight's womb
With sullen cold, and silent gloom,
Welcome Thee to this lowly room.
Little hath Earth to give at best,
But of that little gives the least,
Sullen her mien and cold her cheer,
Her Heavenly Lord to welcome here.
And shall we weave a wreath o'er thee
Of heart out-pouring poesy,
Mysterious birth? Art would express
And toils anew the scene to dress;
Conception labours to find vent,
Yet feels her vain and impotent:
Weak is the thought, the hand, the tongue,
And yet our silence does thee wrong.
The painter and the poet vie
With kind and holy rivalry,
Rifling Imagination's lore
To deck and people that dread floor,
With live and speaking furniture,
And all things holy, bright, and pure.
That shed becomes a ruin'd hall[c]
Once Israel's temple, now to see
Wreck of a wondrous masonry,

[c] The Nativity, by Overbeck.

Glorious in ruin, from whose fall
There goeth forth, as in a dream,
Through distant worlds a living stream.
  Another brings the princes nigh
Of Saba and of Araby,
While on the other hand appear
With pipe and tabor drawing near
A band of shepherds, old and young,
Who on this night with Angels sung.
  Some bring in distance Sion's hill,
Or Tabor, or that mount of ill;
Or there the true Gerizim plant[d]
Of the life-giving Covenant.
Some make that scene the dread resort
Of beings of the Heavenly court,
Whatever may the power bring nigh
Of that tremendous clemency.
Something that may the heart express
Of overwhelming lowliness.
  Some such majestic radiance pour
O'er the blest mother, that no more
In meek subjection hath she shone,
The Mother lost in the dread Son,
The human maid the Child Divine,
The Godhead and the earthly shrine.
But o'er her countenance infuse
An emanation of bright hues,

[d] The Mount of the Beatitudes. See Image the twelfth.

Not saintly stern and pale, with form
By watchings wan; but breathing warm
With female grace and loveliness,
That charm the sense, but awe us less.
  Others from Fancy's world will seek
Symbolic forms high truth to speak;
And thus our limner to the eye
Presents his pictured poesy,
Rake, pail, and shepherd's household gear
Blend with the storied scene that's there,—
Shapes that embody to the sense
The preacher's holy eloquence.
  Thus Joy behind with lifted hands
Wrapt in ecstatic transport stands,
While Hope and Love the painter brings,
Within his bosom breeding wings.
He seems to catch in that bright ray
A something of the Heavenly day;
Of Love's philosophy divine,
Such as it is where Angels shine.
  And Admiration on his knees
The sight in trance-like silence sees:—
Much hath he seen beneath the sun,
The child of adoration,
Seen rugged scenes and waters wild,
And mountains upon mountains piled,
And tracked the stars that fill the sky
With whirlwind-wingèd ecstacy,
Yet never yet seen aught to tell
Of marvel so ineffable.

Behind the Infant's radiant head,
Like holy Simeon thither led,
Kneels heart-transporting Gratitude;
And Virtue with her light endued
Stands, girt for action, and anon
As she that sight doth feed upon,
In attitude both stern and mild,
Points to her Cross and to the Child.

Compassion too with melting eyes,
That speak his deep-stirr'd sympathies,
With folded arms hangs in amaze,
And on the Infant feeds his gaze;—
While Faith, and Hope, and holy Love,
Lean from their radiant seats above.

Now wouldst thou learn with Heaven-taught eye
To read aright this mystery,
Then wait awhile, and that fair shade
Of Virtue,—in bright arms array'd,
And crown'd with helm of burnish'd blaze,
Which o'er her brow unharming plays,—
Shall lead thee to the Teacher's throne:
The King shall there His subjects own,
Sitting upon the mountain ground,
With His disciples gather'd round,
Where from His shrine go forth the floods
Of life-giving Beatitudes.

Here in these Angel-haunted lands,
Where Bethlehem's lowly cradle stands,
Or that hill-top, through clouds that break,
Looks on the Galilean lake,

Here skies and earth do seem to meet
Around His ever-blessed feet;
Together in one blending ray,
Conspire in one bright holiday;
While Heaven seems opening her bright door,
And letting down her burnish'd floor.
This is the land where Israel's stair
Was seen upon the lucid air;
Where most on earth, if not alone,
The haunt of Angels hath been known.
  Fairer than sight of mortal eye
That vision of the opening sky,
Where three bright shapes are earthward bow'd,
And sitting on a golden cloud.
First Faith, that giveth eyes to see,
With cup of immortality;
In her right hand the Cross she bears,
To shew a charmèd life she wears.
And that irradiant form of Love,
Enfolding children from above,
With an immortal power descending,
All things in holy marriage blending,
Preparing the true spotless Bride
That with the First-born may abide.
And Hope, that holds her anchor fast,
Which she within the veil hath cast,
With a meek bird of dove-like wings
To bear the soul to better things.
  Fond vision of the silent heart,
Not poet's thought nor painter's art

Hath power that promise to fulfil!
Prayer hath alone the secret skill
To plant around that living tent,
With all the limner's art hath meant,
And bring to earth the firmament:
With cords of love to weave a crown,
And bring the golden vision down;—
The Jubilee of Heaven and earth,
To celebrate their Maker's birth.
Prayer that high vision shall create,
And make that land the Heavenly gate.

Lord, I would speak of Thee aright,
And meekly: if a poet's might
Moulds in my soul its chains of fire,
Then would my burning thoughts aspire,
Above all earthly things, to be
The bard of Thy nativity!

But better if my heart express
Thy childhood in its lowliness;—
Alas, and was Thy cradle bare
Of all the welcome Earth could spare?
My heart is now a shed more rude,
And sterner is the solitude;
Darker my spirit's night, while sound
Remorseful memories, like the wind;
And restless passions, prowling round,
Therein an entrance strive to find.
Wilt Thou within so mean a shed,
So vile a manger lay Thine head?

If so, all things the foulest there
Shall in Thy countenance stand bare,
But should they catch Thy gleam Divine
Shall like an Eastern palace shine.

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IMAGE THE THIRTEENTH.

If thou wouldest attain unto that grace which thou desirest, put thy trust in God only, and distrust thyself.

Although thou mayest have determined to seek after Virtue, as observed in the contemplation of that mystery which we have considered, and to follow Christ [A]: yet, alas, the World [B] and the weight of corrupt nature will hold thee: and perhaps in addition to these thou wilt be pulled backward by the chains of Sin [C]. But put thy trust in God, and Christ shall liberate thee [D] by His grace; and will point out unto thee the way to Virtue [E]. Without the aid of His grace man is like an Infant [F], who is unable either to rise, or to stand, or to defend, and feed himself, or even to seek those things which he needeth from another. Have no confidence therefore in thyself, but put thy trust in God only, and His grace; as the holy David did [G], when he overcame Goliath the Philistine, not with a sling and a stone, but in the Name of the Lord. And take care in thus adventuring with the sure aid of God, that thou art by no means of a doubtful mind, lest with St. Peter [H] thou beginnest to sink on account of the weakness of thy Faith.

Trusting always in God.

Peace.—That vision of the holy Child,
Shrin'd in the bosom undefil'd,
Therein shall go from strength to strength,
Moulding His members; till at length
The new Man's stature shall unfold,
Growing in virtue meek and bold.

Penitens.—Alas, the fetter on me lies
Of unbaptizèd phantasies,
And holds me, like an unseen weight,
Affection unregenerate.

Peace.—Again, again thou must return,
And of that holy Childhood learn;
Cloth'd in this form of wisdom mild,
He there would teach thee as a child,
To turn from manhood's wisdom high,
And learn of helpless infancy.

Penitens.—Daughter of Hope and holy Love,
Tell me, thou herald from above,
What is that emblem in the grove,
A babe, of fear unconscious, laid
Beneath an adder-haunted shade?

Peace.—'Tis this that speaks thy nature's state,
Thus powerless left, and desolate,
Born in a world of serpent stings,
'Mid crawling worms and creeping things,
It helpless, hopeless, hapless lies,
And hath no language but its cries.

Penitens.—I see him thus upon the ground
With deadly foes encompass'd round,
Prey of the venom'd tooth and lies,
And laden with infirmities;
Is this the embryo of the sky,
The child of immortality?

Peace.—And this thy helplessness to know
Is thy best wisdom here below,
Yea, this to know is to be wise
In Heaven-revealèd mysteries;
This is the wisdom of the skies.

Penitens.—From day to day on every side
Are we by new temptations tried,
Like serpents which around us creep,
While we seem bound in powerless sleep.

To know ourselves is to confess
Our own unaided helplessness.

Peace.—A child's true wisdom more and more
Learn by thy falls,—a spirit poor,—
The wisdom of its infant cries,
Which on a parent's hand relies—
The wisdom of its calls for aid:
This learn and thou art perfect made.
More wisdom this than Plato's schools,
And all the Stagyrite's sage rules,
Than learned bowers of Academe,
And fam'd Ilissus' golden stream.
On Jordan rests a brighter gleam,
Wherein the leprous skin defil'd
Again becomes a little child.

Penitens.—Now from His childhood I would turn,
That I might of His manhood learn;
His word doth break the captive's chains,
And that His word in fire remains,—
"Come unto Me, ye sin-oppress'd,
My very yoke shall be your rest,
'Tis I who heal all malady,
And set the sin-bound prisoner free."
Lord, I have by experience known,
That all I have which is my own,
And whatsoe'er I virtue call,
Oft leads me to a heavier fall.

I make me cords to hold from wrong,
And bind my will by purpose strong,
But my resolves, as cords of tow,
Before the strength of passion go,
Like hempen bonds which flames o'er-run,
Or icy streams before the sun.

I could sit, and sit and weep
O'er my heart's sorrow;
My wounds in blood Thou bidd'st steep,
Thy mantle borrow.

If most forgiv'n could most love,
Sweet were my sadness;
I should be a wing'd dove,
And drink wells of gladness.

But thoughts sin hath bosom'd long,—
Chains by mercy riven,—
They like birds of darkness throng,
They load thoughts of Heaven.

I could sit, and sit and weep
O'er my heart's sorrow;
But on Thine arm Thou bidd'st sleep,
And wait Thy morrow.

But list, I hear a happier strain,
Like sunbeams bright that blend with rain,
Till both in rainbows fair remain!

Another voice is heard.

I will sing, for I am poor,
As bird upon the wing,
Which hath not house, nor barn, nor store,
Yet merrily doth sing.

I will sing, for I am lone
As one who went to roam,
And sat him down to think upon
His Father and his home.

I will sing, for I am sad
For many my misdeeds;
It is my sadness makes me glad,
For Love for Sorrow pleads.

I will sing, for dearer far
Such pledges are of Love,
Than all that throng'd around the car,
Which boyish Fancy drove.

Fidelio appearing.

Lo, flying from a burning cave,
And wood that might have been their grave,
I saw two wights who sore withstood,
And fled the monster of the wood:
I dare not look to them again,
But fain would join thy solemn strain.
As I attain this path of light,
My chains drop from me, at the sight

Of Him Whom I have seen below:
Sing we His praises as we go,
Less shall we feel our toilsome woe.

Penitens and Fidelio.

Lord, who hast ta'en us by Thy hand,
'Tis only by Thy strength we stand;
Thou art the Way, the Truth, the Life,—
Yea, through this world of sin and strife,
Thy sheep is on Thy shoulders borne
By Thee unto the gates of morn.
Still do we see Thee all in all,
Still do we hear Thy loving call;
Not only by the gentle sign,
Thy still and lowly voice divine;
Not by the whisper of the gale,
Or beck'ning hand at evening pale;
But by the cry (so strong and loud,
As that dread Voice heard from the cloud),
Of Thine example,—and Thy tears,—
And of Thy blood, which wakes our fears,—
And by the seal in Baptism given,—
And by a name that's writ in Heaven,—
And by the silence of the shrine,
Wherein our spirit cries to Thine,—
And by the scent of odours sweet,
That dwells around Thy sacred feet.
But who is this? some radiant friend
Doth from the portal bright descend,

With glittering arms and golden sheen
Encompass'd, like a Heavenly Queen!

Virtue.—On this bright road I come to meet
The pilgrims to the Heavenly seat;
Heard in the morning's dawning light,
Your love doth here my steps invite;
Which like the brooklet, clear and strong,
Sings as it speeds its course along.
As wakening from your nightly trance,
Ye onward by this road advance,
The eye of day shall ope more clear,
And I be your interpreter.
Deep in the soul the vision springs,
Shewing in death immortal things:
Here in the mirror of the Word,
Each hath his own true lesson heard;
Faith may therein his conflict view,
And Penitence his strength renew.
Come, and yourselves behold in them,—
Lo, here that youth of Bethlehem,
Unarm'd upon the battle-field,
With that Philistine, deftly steel'd
With greaves of brass and coat of mail;
Here in that child which shall prevail,
Faith's true encounter is portray'd,
That leaneth not on earthly aid,
But in the Name of God on high,
Which shall obtain the victory,

And shall for ever overthrow
This world's arm'd prince, the giant foe.
And here comes forth to eyes of sense
The lesson of meek Penitence;
Where Christ is walking on the wave,
And shews His mighty power to save.
And see upon destruction's brink
Good Peter is allow'd to sink,
That we with him might learn to tread
Among the dying and the dead,
Upheld divinely o'er the sea
Of fathomless eternity.
For this Christ comes from the unseen
To train us on His strength to lean,
And Mercy's marvels, round Him thrown,
Are but to make His presence known;
His presence and His power to bless
When man doth know his helplessness.
And all His Word, both Old and New,
Is but to bring that faith to view,
And in some storied guise set nigh
Man's struggle and his victory;
Thus to reveal in vision clear
Christ's near approach to mortals here:—
That He who fills the sky with stars,
And to the ocean sets His bars,—
The bars of His Almighty Name,—
Will come to keep their soul from blame.

The three together.

From centre to circumference,
Through all the realms of soul and sense
To bounds of th' everlasting hills,
Whatever is His will fulfils,
All are before Him as they stand;
No atom stirs, nor drop, nor sand
Without Him, moves in Him alone,
As Seraphim around His throne.
Thou art Thyself the Sun of Light,
The Sea of Goodness infinite;
While Thy dread justice overawes,
Whoe'er in heart goes from Thy laws,
Shall answer Thy mysterious call,
Or 'neath Thy power o'erwhelming fall.
Thou givest strength, and dost require
That all should love Thee, Thee desire.

Virtue.—Meek pilgrim, sore beset with foes,
And mark'd with scars that speak thy woes,
Upon thy way still onward press,
And look to Him in thy distress,
He gives hind's feet to climb on high,
And eagle's wings wherewith to fly.

Penitens.—But hark, methinks a gentle voice
Bids valley, hill, and lake rejoice,
So sweet that now the morning star
Still lingers on his waning car,
And listens to that voice of mirth;

'Tis sure of Heaven and not of earth,
Where such melodious sounds have birth.
Now near it soars, now sad the lay,
In distance dying far away,
Now grows upon the listening ear,
With happy sounds distinct and clear.

An Angelic voice heard as of a child singing.

The hind hath 'scaped! now haste away,
Thy life is given thee for a prey;
Now haste away, thou hind forlorn,
And with thee take the wings of morn!
On and on! thy toils are broken,
Streaks of light the Day betoken;
Fly amid the purple dawn,
Hasten to the upland lawn,
To slopes where odorous cedars sigh,
To pine-clad tops of mountains high!
Take wings and soar, thou gentle hind,
And leave the nets and dart behind.
Fly, fly above this lower air,
To mist-rang'd halls and mansions fair;
Fly on to homes of wind and cloud,
Which wrack this lower world and shroud;
Fly on to stars in air that move,—
Take spirits' wings, the stars above,
Fly to the golden realms of Love;
There only, gentle hind, canst thou be free,
Safe from the hunter's toils in rest and liberty.

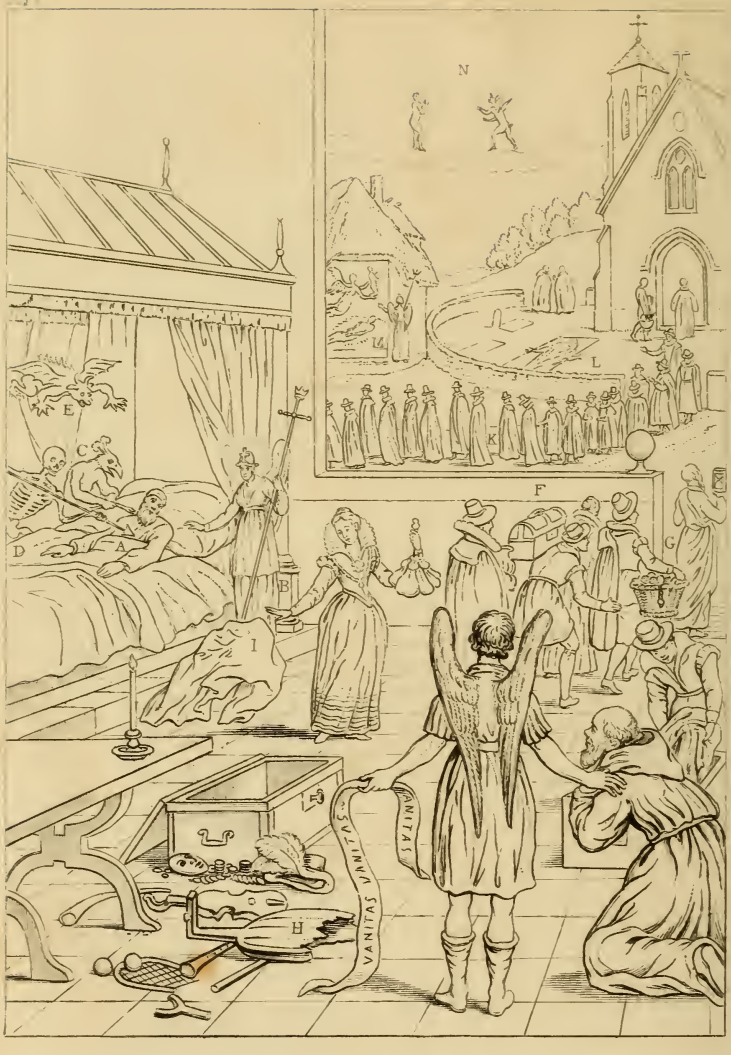
N
C
L
K
F
G
E
C
D
A
B
I
H
VANITAS VANITATVM

IMAGE THE FOURTEENTH.

Consider how in death thou wilt wish to have cultivated any particular virtue, and make use of life and opportunity.

Reflect now, if thou wilt not wish in death [A] to have followed virtue rather than vice. For at that time Virtue [B] alone will stand by thee, and be a consolation to thee; when Sin [C] and its worm shall torment thee, when Death [D] shall terrify thee, and the Demon [E] will be ready at hand to hurry away the impenitent soul. When even thine intimate friends [F], and they that are flesh and blood, shall carry away thy riches: when Occasion [G] shall have departed; when all worldly pleasures and sports [H] shall have perished. When out of all thy earthly possessions nothing will remain to thee, but the winding-sheet [I]. When thy friends and kindred [K] will follow indeed thy funeral procession to the grave, but, alas, must desert thee there, and leave thee to earth and forgetfulness: and however eagerly thou mayest desire [L] their society, yet thou canst obtain it not. On the other hand, the Righteous man [M], being refreshed by Virtue, and by good Angels, shall have death converted into life, and sorrow changed into joy. O with what tranquillity of mind will the righteous man, with what perturbation of mind will the sinner approach unto the Judgment-seat of God [N]!

The Death of the Righteous.

There is a spot beside a hill[a],
Where sleep the dead in holy ground,
Nor know I aught so sweet and still
As is the peace which there is found.
  There, where beneath the church-yard wall
Adown the glen the waters fall,
Beneath a tapering ash-tree's shade
Three graves are by each other laid.
  Around the very place doth brood
A strange and holy Quietude,
Where lingers long the evening gleam,
And stilly sounds the mountain stream.
  I know not if it is the scene,
Bosom'd in hills by the ravine;
Or if it is the conscious mind
Hallows the spot, and stills the wind,
And makes the very place to know
The peace of them that sleep below,

[a] A village church-yard to the north of Aberystwith.

Investing nature with the spell
Of that strange calm unspeakable.
Methinks that both together blend
To hallow their calm peaceful end,—
The thoughts of them that slumber there,
Seem still to haunt the holy ground;
And e'en the spot and solemn air
Themselves partake that calm profound.
Methinks that He who oft at even
Brings stillness o'er the earth and Heaven,
Till mountains, skies, and neighbouring sea
Blend in one solemn harmony,
Hath caus'd e'en Nature's self to grace
Their sweet and holy resting-place.
It seems the air of Heaven, and so
It was when erst they liv'd below,
Around their dwelling seem'd to be
A charm of deep serenity;
The vale, the hill, the quiet air,
Were made their hallow'd calm to share,
And whosoe'er to them drew near
Seem'd to put on a holy fear.
'Twas so erewhile—and when at last
One had surviv'd, and hence had past
To scenes of other neighbourhood,
Yet still the place of her abode
The skies and earth conspir'd to bless
With that unearthly quietness.
'Twas not the play of high-ton'd sense,
Nor keenly-eyed intelligence,

Which have a power I know full well
To charm us;—but a deeper spell,
A something in a holy life,
Which, unapproachable by strife,
Shed its own halo round the spot,
That Care awhile herself forgot,
And Passion could not there intrude
Upon their holy quietude.

'Tis hard, when by affection led,
To speak of the long-cherish'd Dead,
Lest haply they should linger near,
And human praise should pain the ear
Of them who Christ's own face behold,
Or hide them 'neath His garment's fold.

It is enough that, where they sleep,
The Angels still their watches keep,
Which round them in this world of sense,
Shed once their calming influence.

The blackbird there, when showers are gone,
Still pipes at eve his benison;
And on the frosty vernal morn
The valley's cheerful sounds are borne
As erst upon the mountain side;
The spot is still as ere they died;
But there is something on the scene
More hallow'd now than it hath been.

I sought the place, when they were gone;—
In silent pensiveness alone
I went upon the spot to grieve;
It was a calm autumnal eve;

And like a holy pilgrimage
Its memory doth my heart engage;
And oft when in this worldly life
I am o'ertaken with its strife,
That hour comes back with its deep calm,
And on my senses breathing balm,
Awakens thoughts that deepest dwell
Within the bosom's hidden well,
Which makes the eyes with tears to swell.

Beneath an ash-tree's light-green shade
There side by side the Three are laid—
Laid by that church-yard gate at last,
Whereby they oft together pass'd.
That ash puts on and drops its leaves,
When the dishevell'd Autumn grieves;
But no rude change again shall come,
To reach them in their peaceful home.

When Death first oped the silent door,
The youth arose, and went before,
And so from places of the blest
Grief came to be his parents' guest,
To fit them for his happier rest.

The Priest was such as Chaucer drew
In very lineament and hue;
Save when his love o'er children bent,
It something to the surface sent,—
A child-like soul, which takes delight
In lowly deeds, and shews aright
The true and guileless Israelite.

Often he seem'd by toil oppress'd,
Oftener in very toil at rest;
Nor ever deem'd his labour done
Till he that last repose had won,
Where now the chequer'd shadows wave,
And breathe that peace above his grave.

Since he hath been in yonder tomb,
Full many a house hath caught the gloom,
Full many a widow's heart is cold,
And many used his hand to hold,
Have miss'd the shepherd of the fold.

Her form I see, though gone from sight,
Yet ne'er of her can speak aright;
But if the Peace which dwells above
E'er took the form of earthly Love,
'Twas like that spirit meek, whose price
Is more than costliest sacrifice.

Lord, if my many sins below
Forbid me here that peace to know,
Grant when, from these my chains set free
I put on immortality,
I may be with them at the close,
And find at last their true repose.

When thus the door is shut at last,
And we sit musing on the past,
Releas'd from things that cheat the sight,
We seem to judge of life aright:
We seem with them whose day is o'er
To sit upon the eternal shore;

Safe from the tumult and the wave,
And learn the wisdom of the grave.
  Preach, read, and study as we will,
Death is the mighty teacher still,—
Here something of celestial light
Seems to break in upon the sight:
We seem to see as Angels see,
Taught somewhat of the mystery
Of them who, gather'd to the fold,
Afar this troubled scene behold;
Where things of earth no more can charm,
Nor wake their wonder and alarm,
No more can their affections mock;
While, hid within their sheltering Rock,
They hear the passing tempest roar;
Hear the turmoil without the door,
Which shakes their faithless hearts no more.
  Amuse our fancies as we will,
Death is the mighty teacher still:
Dispute, debate we as we may,
His is the wisdom none gainsay.
When he shall first uplift the veil,
And Memory sternly tells her tale;
When lost Occasion goes to dwell
For ever with the Unchangeable;
When all upturn'd the festive token,
The harp upon the ground lies broken,
The outside turn'd of Pleasure's mask,
And no one found her aid to ask;

The feather'd plume is cast aside,
We have no more a heart for pride;
And all the emblems of our play
Seem to upbraid our earthly stay;
The lifeless toys all find a voice,
To tell us of our broken choice.
The World herself in silence stands,
And in amazement lifts her hands,
To see that now our work is o'er,
Of all our furniture and store,
What now remains our wants to meet,
Is nothing but a winding sheet:
While e'en our kindred from us go,
To share what we have left below.

Now the lone inmate of the tomb,
Is left to nakedness and gloom,
And laid in cold corruption's seat
His lingering friends seems to entreat;
But all in vain, they cannot stay,
The silent mourners steal away,
To weep awhile, and then put on
The treasures left by him that's gone,—
To share them with the setting sun.

Let me awhile thy patience crave,
There is no teacher like the grave;—
Come and behold this dying room,
Say, what can lighten here the gloom,—
When Sin doth at thy bosom knock,
And he whom thou hast made thy liege,

Doth call in Death thy woes to mock?
And as he presses on the siege,
Within thy breast th' undying worm
Begins to shew his serpent-form,—
What else can cheer thee or illume,
And kindle light in that dim room,
But Virtue with her cross, to sight
Coming apparell'd in the light;
As in a night of darkest noon,
Walking o'er clouds the silent moon?
  Refuse we counsel as we may,
Yet unto Death shall none say nay:—
Expanded is the solemn scroll,
Which Time throughout did still unroll,
And gave o'er earthly things to float,
But we had other sights to note;
On all around us still he wrote
O vanity of vanities!
'Mid Heaven and earth the Angel flies,
And unto all creation cries
O vanity of vanities!
On every side the lesson lies,
Reveal'd to hands, and ears, and eyes—
The earth proclaims it to the skies,
The sky the same to earth replies,
O vanity of vanities!
  This man doth unto man proclaim,—
Day tells to day on wheels of flame,—
His very nature and his frame,
His power, his riches, and his fame,

Resolves, and purposes, and aim,
Yea, e'en his sorrows and his shame,
Whate'er he touches tells the same,
That vanity is man's true name.
Then cheat our fancies as we will,
Death is the mighty teacher still.
Still from ourselves ourselves we hide,
But he holds up the glass to pride,
And shews us, reft of all, in dress
Of our own utter nakedness.
Nor need we earthly garb or store,
To pass with us that awful door,
For should we gain such bliss, to come
Unto the everlasting home,
We need no clothing which decays,
But that which unto Faith is given,
Wove of imperishable rays,
The robe of holiness and Heaven.
To them whose pride and glory here
Lies buried in Christ's sepulchre,
To pass from this our sky-arch'd room
Is but a leaving of the tomb.
If sensual leanings first shall cease,
Then to go hence is but release.
When alms and prayers have gone before,
And daily strivings to be poor
Disrobe us of mortality,
And in the heart's core breed that sigh
Which pierces Heaven, and from above
Brings down the pledg'd immortal Love.

Then when the Deeds which to the end
The disembodied soul attend,
Love with her bright beams shall have lit,
Faith, who at Eden's door doth sit,
Shall know them, and admit them there,
Bearing thy soul through fields of air,
To rest in peaceful Paradise,
Until the Judge unbars the skies.

If such their end who ere they die
Do put on immortality,
Then tell me is there spot below,
If thou to Wisdom's school wouldst go,
Like that calm grave so deeply still
Upon the shelf of that green hill,
Where lingers long th' Autumnal eve,
As loath that tranquil scene to leave?

Oft when the Day his race hath run,
Beyond the calm retiring sun,
The clouds our eyes love to beguile
With shadows of some blessed isle;
But lest thereon too long we gaze
It disappears with parting rays,
That we from fancies yearning there
May turn, and for the night prepare,
And for the great eternal morn,
Which on the wheels of night is borne:
When like the sun we see below,
The good through realms of space shall go,
And bear about them endless day,
While night before them flies away.

XV.

IMAGE THE FIFTEENTH.

Go and learn how great hath been their peace, whose hearts have been stayed on God.

How tranquillizing are those places that are associated in our minds with the remembrance, or are blessed with the company of Saints! How great have been the consolations which those holy men have enjoyed [A]! For Virtue [B] is ever united with Peace [C]; one beareth the palm-branch of future reward; the other hath the olive-bough of present tranquillity. Thus is it when Jesus Christ cometh to be in the heart, for in Him alone the soul findeth rest. Consider, I pray you, with what feelings the great and the poor alike have visited the humble abodes of the Saints [D], and have lingered with holy reverence about their tombs [E]: and point out at a distance to the cities wherein they have dwelt [F]. Yea, the places of their earthly habitation have been far more blessed than by the feelings of men; for even in this world Angels minister unto them [G], and God Himself delights to be with them, and is pleased to call Himself their God. How different on the contrary are the lives of the children of this world! how little of real peace is theirs, although they may attain all the objects of their desires! Vice still harasses, disquiets, and saddens her votaries [H], even in the midst of their highest worldly delights and vanities [I]. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked."

Visiting Holy Places,

OR THE PILGRIMS OF ST. DAVID'S.

I PASS'D beneath a mouldering tower,
When on me came a solemn hour
Of feelings never known before,
But which from me shall pass no more.
A scene beneath the wicket gate,
Most beautiful, most desolate!
It was St. David's ancient pile,
Chancel, nave, tower, and window'd aisle,
And skirting all the Western side
A palace fair in ruin'd pride,
With storied range in order set,
And portal, arch, and parapet.
There hiding from the haunts of men
In hollow of the mountain glen,
Religion's venerable hold,
With wrecks and ruin manifold,
Burst full on the astonish'd eye,
Hoar in sublime antiquity.

An evening mist which o'er it hung
A deeper desolation flung,
While 'neath its skirts were dimly seen,
Within a shaggy drear ravine,
Black grazing herds in pastures rude,
In ivy-wallèd solitude,
Signs of wild life which, wandering near,
Made dreariness itself more drear.
That mist it seem'd a fitting shroud
For desolation, and the cloud
Oblivion's pall, that dropp'd in tears,
As peopled with long vanish'd years,
Waving their shadowy wings in gloom,
And hovering o'er their ancient home.
O sight forlorn, and yet so fair
In ruin, that transfixèd there
I gaz'd, until I seem'd to stand
Upon a strange unearthly land,
Between the dying and the dead!
So many centuries o'er my head
Their solemn shade in silence spread;
So awful was the drear around,
The desolation so profound:
While beauty and magnificence
Strove with a beam, calm but intense,
To pierce the darkly-mantling gloom,
Like star-light through a broken tomb;
Or like the dimly-labouring Moon
That now stood nigh on her white throne,

Struggling in vain to penetrate
The mist that wrapt her shrouded state,
And where her twilight radiance fell
Made desolation visible.

Then wonder not, in such a scene,
If what now is and what hath been
Come o'er us, with so deep a thrill
That though the surface seems so still,
They waken thoughts that lie most deep,
Amid the ruin'd scene to weep.

It seem'd the gathering of past years,
The place of penitence and tears:
And where in cell or roofless shrine
The saintly dead in peace recline,
In thoughts of them that slumber by,
We seem to feel the Judgment nigh,
And from the fellowship that's there
Shrink with a something like despair:—
To think that when we rise again
We must awake 'mid holy men,
'Mid those who so could live and die,
With pure resolve and purpose high,
As thus to leave for days to come
A fragrance breathing o'er their tomb.
In that despair past deeds arise,
And each a voice of shame supplies,
Till a new will to hope allied
Hath conscience to the altar tied,
And speaks amendment which shall last,
And years far better than the past.

And if of old they so could feel
Who at this altar came to kneel;—
Nor superstition mar the sense
Of heart-exalting reverence;—
'Twere well if pilgrims would repair
Again to drink this sacred air.
Thus thought I while in dim moonlight
I slowly wander'd through the site
Of crumbling walls, half-falling tower,
Mullions and arch, which darkly lower
And o'er the intruder seem to frown,
Putting on size beyond their own,
Like giants in enchanted tale,
As dimly seen through misty veil.
While soft and wild a mountain rill,
Which only broke the twilight still,
Had caught an ancient chime forlorn,
And 'mid the ruins seem'd to mourn,
As by the palace-walls it pass'd,
A mouldering bridge-way o'er it cast.
And there was one who said that he
(Speaking in his simplicity)
Had oft been here at dead of night,
But yet no form had met his sight,—
By that negation bringing nigh
His secret deep expectancy;—
But that the midnight tombs around
Strange floatings by were said to sound,
And through the aisled stillness deep,
Strains indistinct were heard to sweep.

Blest wisdom, dress'd in fancy's hue!
Such legends, if they be not true,
Speak what our nature here divines
'Mid holy sepulchres and shrines!
Such thoughts in me a place have found
'Mid contemplations more profound,
And seem to mingle with my themes.
More true than life such holy dreams;—
I deem in them more truth to lie
Than all man's cold philosophy.
And they, I ween, who sleep below
Had more of wisdom than we know;
With alms and prayers and penitence,
They sternly conquer'd things of sense.
And with them in their slumbers deep
Their fastings and their vigils sleep,
And shall awake with them to stand,
When the last Judgment is at hand.
Well may we hope their peaceful rest,
Whose labours thus their life attest;
They built in marble, built as they
Who wish'd these stones should see the day
When Christ returns, and these vast walls
May stand o'er them when Judgment calls.
Not that the shrines in grandeur built
Can do away the stains of guilt;
But witnesses they are of love
Which only shall unfailing prove—
Of paths in stern abasement trod—
Of self that died to live to God—

What if in marble they recline,
It is not idle pomp, but sign
Of Resurrection,—and a state
Which doth in awful stillness wait
The opening of the Eastern gate.
The Saint who fix'd this sacred site
Liv'd once a holy Anchorite,
By old Lanthony's honour'd cell,
Where mount-encircled Ewias' dell[a]
Clos'd darkly round his solitude.
The forest wild supplied his food,
And all his drink lone Honddy's spring,
That men to God might anthems sing
In pillar'd choirs of marble: then
What if our God apart from men
Should plant His honour in this place
To witness 'gainst their fallen race;—
Something that might His Name express—

[a] Where Llanthony Abbey now stands in the vale of Ewias, which is surrounded by the Black mountains. Mr. Southey thus speaks of the circumstance:

> "Here was it, stranger, that the patron saint
> Of Cambria pass'd his age of penitence,
> A solitary man: and here he made
> His hermitage, the roots his food, his drink
> Of Honddy's mountain stream."

And the poet Drayton,

> "He did only drink what crystal Hodney yields,
> And fed upon the leeks he gather'd in the fields."

A voice, for sure it is no less,
Of warning in the wilderness;
What if He thus their pious deeds
Remembers in their children's needs!
No sound is here of ruder mirth,
Yet if there be a peace on earth,
Here with Religion shall she dwell,
And rear again her hermit cell,—
By flowing years more sanctified,
And nearer to the end allied.
Glorious was the design ye drew,
Yet Time itself hath built for you
A house of wisdom, far above
All ye design'd; as if in love
He mellows down the stony tress
Into a solemn tenderness:
And clothes yon beauteous roof on high
With a more dread sublimity:
With quiet awe around them lingers,
Touching, as loath to harm, with soft and reverend fingers.
And he who loves the mystic's lore
Hath haunts unseen he may explore,
The Misereres[b] here have place,
As hiding from the day of Grace
The quaint device and snakes that twine,
And dogs impure, and unclean swine,

[b] Small shelving seats with grotesque carvings under them, remarkable in this Cathedral.

Which speak the serpent's brood below,
Whereon the feet of Faith shall go,
Ways of the wicked overthrown,
And all their pride "turn'd upside down[c]."
Or with distorted tortured face
They fly the music-haunted place.
  Stay yet, in holy stillness tread,
This is the mansion of the Dead;
Their City doth in quiet lie,
The living here may learn to die.
Like fabled town as legends tell,
Where by some spell invincible
Its inmates, turn'd to marble, sleep;
Where Silence, wont her watch to keep,
With felt-shod footsteps softly went,
And o'er the sleepers stilly bent;
But nothing their deep trance shall break
Till the Enchanter's trump shall wake.
Thus peopling nook and shrine and cell,
Here stony forms around in sacred slumber dwell.
  Holy Enchantment, linger still
And all my deep-fraught bosom fill!
The dead seem breathing all around,
And we alone are shadows found.
Religion hath her reverence lent,
And o'er them spreads her solemn tent,
Not as in close-built cities pent;

[c] Ps. cxlvi. 9.

For hills which bound the distant ken
Banish the thoughts and feet of men,
And make a solemn quiet here,
So calm, so beautiful, so drear!
No thought of cities must intrude
Upon this mountain solitude.
For this that mitred Saint of old
Withdrew his charge—made this the hold
Of grave Religion in the wild,
Pillar'd, and arch'd, and shrin'd, and aisl'd,
Deeming her strength the world to save
Were greater, from the noisy wave
Withdrawn to stillness of the grave.
That greater was her power to bless
From this the mountain wilderness,
Than 'mid the stir of civil life,
The feast—the party—and the strife;
She here a Heavenly power might gain,
Without which all their toil was vain;
And from this fastness on the strand
Might send forth Priests to all the land.
O Night, O place with wisdom fraught,
How deep your soul hath in me wrought,
And still I linger on the thought;
How do ye o'er my bosom swell,
Feelings too big for words to tell!
This is the place of hallow'd peace,
Where sounds of worldly wisdom cease,
To Heaven in solemn music led,
And converse with the saintly dead.

Here could I bid the world good night,
And live a pensive anchorite.
No sound is here of tables spread,
Where Joyance lifts her festive head;
But yet of peace a deeper sense
Than in their glad magnificence:
And if you ask the reason why,
Nature must own it with a sigh,
'Tis suited more for those that die.
E'en at the feast is conscience stirr'd,
Her scourge is felt, unseen, unheard;
Where, though aloud the laughter swells,
Her secret in the bosom dwells:
There is a sadness in the strain,
As from a heart o'ercharg'd with pain.
The Sabine bard of love and wine
Sighs while the flowers his brows entwine;
How touching still recurs his lay,
Of poor delights that cannot stay,
Of death that doth alone remain!—
To sad regrets it turns again.
Ever unsated strong Desire
Builds high, and ever rises higher,
And there his mate, dark-bosom'd Care,
Her cradle rocks with troublous air,
Nestling her brood of sorrows there.
Peace here in rocks may build her nest,
Or charm the halcyon wave, and brood at rest.
The night hath pass'd—the morn hath come,
And through the village height I roam,

It is a bright and summer day,
Where Thought hath led her pensive way
Beside an ancient Cross I stand,
Which overlooks the distant land.
Before the face of golden dawn
Th' enshrouding mist hath now withdrawn,
And lifting up its canopy
Discloses near the dark blue sea,
Close circling with its ridge of blue,—
And craggy isles that come to view,—
Upon the dark and ruin'd scene
Throwing a beautiful serene,
Taking from that their sombre face,
And adding to their tranquil grace.
O day, O place with beauty fill'd,
How deep have ye my fancy thrill'd;
The spirit so of ages gone
Hath mark'd this spot to be his own!
Ancient Menevia, o'er thee still
I linger, sea, and rock, and hill
Peopling with recollections high
Of more divine antiquity.
Sons of a happier, holier day,
I cannot deem ye gone away,
The moaning wind your requiem sings,
To all around your memory clings,
No crowded town, no fertile scene,
To stand yourselves and us between.
And what if marble tombs must die,
Nature doth monuments supply:

Yon craggy Isles that skirt the strand
Tradition marks as her own band:
In echoing shore and wild sea-bird
The Organ and the Choir[d] are heard.
And in yon rocks with billows hoar,
Which seem to watch and guard the shore,
"The Bishop and his Clerks[e]" are seen.
O firm-set, ever-during scene!
May those thy Pastors thus with thee
Share the strong rock's stability,
And in their place be faithful found,
Deep-rooted in the hidden ground,
That though the sea and tempest roar,
Their firm foundations move no more!
Yea, lov'd Menevia, if to thee
O'er mount and vale my spirits flee;
Yea, if to thee my fancy yearns,
If early love within me burns
At thy dear name, my native land,—
If thrills a pulse in heart or hand
For home, or shrine, or Church below,
This is the dearest wish I know.

[d] Ramsey Island, one part of which is called the Organ from the sound of the sea, and another the Choir from the noise of the sea-birds.

[e] Seven insulated rocks near the coast, known by the name of "the Bishop and his Clerks."

PART III.

XVI.

IMAGE THE SIXTEENTH.

The Lord sitteth above the water-flood; and the Lord remaineth a King for ever.

Whom therefore wilt thou serve, the mighty God [A] or the Devil [B]? Virtue inviteth thee to serve God [C], whose child thou wert born again in Baptism; but Vice enticeth thee away, to return to the service of the Devil [D], which thou hast renounced. Consider what thou art doing; for who is God? He is Three and yet One [E]; the Fountain of all good [F]; Eternal [G]; Almighty [H]; infinitely Wise [I]; most Bountiful [K]; alone satisfying the heart [L]; filling all things [M], and every where present; most Just [N]; the most mighty King [O]. Come therefore unto Him; offer unto Him all thou hast; give up thy heart [P] unto Him, as the Bride [Q] burning with love; deliver it unto Him through Faith, Hope, and Charity [R]. As far as thou canst, draw all men unto the love of Him [S], being thyself inflamed with zeal for His honour, and doing all things unto His glory. Consider what great things He hath done for thee, and what good gifts He hath bestowed on thee in thine adoption. Who can tell the privileges of our New Birth in Baptism? "His paths are in" those "great waters, and His footsteps are not known." "Out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" go forth the waters of life, "clear as crystal." "The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God; the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most Highest."

The Waters of the City of God[a].

Born from the deep of the Baptismal flood
She sprung, with wings half pois'd to fly to Heaven,
Heavenward her palm she pointed; as she stood
A warlike attitude to her was given,
And round her as she rose the clouds were riven;
A Cross her helm, a Cross her halbert strong:
She seem'd as one come from the clouds of even,
Who did on earth to higher worlds belong,
As to the waves she sung her clear Baptismal song.

"Lift up thy voice, thou mighty Main,
The thunder of thy song,
Thou utterest thy glorious strain
A thousand years along.
Free Ocean, lift thy voice again,
While mantling round thee thy blue robe,
Thou seem'st to live, and to rejoice,
And symbol round the peopled globe
Th' Almighty's awful voice[b].

[a] The following is not descriptive of the picture annexed, but adapted to it, as not altogether unsuitable.

[b] Ezek. xliii. 2. Rev. i. 15; xiv. 2; xix. 6.

Stretch forth thine arms,—thy bright blue arms,—
The big broad world around,
And shake thy locks,—thy bright blue locks,—
And let thy trumpet sound!
Go forth, ye waves, exulting bound,
Go forth from shore to shore!
He laughs along and spreads alarms;
From pole to pole his thundering sides he rocks;
With wild tumultuous roar,
He roves to unseen worlds afar,
And bears his watery war.

The Heavens do in thy bosom sleep,
In their immensity,
With hosts that range th' etherial deep,
Dark-bosom'd, glorious Sea!
And there the Moon in deeps of light
Doth make herself a glorious place,
While, through the mantle of the night,
Glass'd in thy watery world the Heavens behold their face.

Come, let me listen unto thee,
And read thy dark-writ brow,
Great Ocean! ah, I know thee now,
Mysterious, awful Sea!
Sign of what is, and what shall be,
Birthplace of things that cannot die!
My childhood lov'd thy vocal shore,
With a mysterious fear,

And watch'd thy living waves expiring there,
With rippling froth and gentle roar,
And now I haunt thy sides with awful fond regret;
I see thy watery hall,
And gaze, and gazing yet
I feel a something gone I would in vain recall.

Great sign of our Baptismal birth,
With twice ten thousand hands,
Embracing the else failing earth,
As with sweet swaddling bands;
O mighty storehouse, awful Sea,
Th' Almighty's footsteps are in thee,
When He doth walk abroad,
His ways where life and healing dwell,
By human eye untraceable!
In thee there lies the hidden road
To the celestial towers,
Whose gates are pearl of living blaze,
And agate-pav'd her bowers,
Wherein the white-cloth'd pilgrim strays,
Led on to those immortal walls by the soft-footed Hours.

Lift up thy voice, dread watery wild,
I know thy sounds divine,
Now thy deep voice I understand,
That speaks from land to land,
Thou art the great Baptismal sign,
Life-giving, pure, profound.

Deep in thy halls with waters piled
Angelic steps abound:
The sky, with its star-peopled space,
Doth gaze enamour'd on thy face,
And wheresoe'er thy glass is found,
In this dark-corner'd earth by sin defil'd,
Sleeps calmly in thy lov'd embrace,
Reliev'd and reconcil'd.

Spread forth thy bosom, awful Sea!
Thou in Jehovah's house of old
Wast on the pillar'd Twelve unroll'd[c],
Dread emblem of great majesty.
And in His living Church on earth
Doth thy vast laver stand,
Great fountain of Baptismal birth
For children born for the eternal land.
But in that House where Angel-hosts adore,
That Sea shall be no more[d],
For none there die, and none are born,
No longer from the sea doth rise the purple morn.

Of mighty floods majestic seat
In arching blue uprear'd;
On thy abyss the Paraclete
Erst dove-like deign'd to brood,
Ere sun or stars had yet appear'd
To light that solitude,

[c] 1 Kings vii. 23. 25. [d] Rev. xxi. 1.

The formless void profound;
Until the Earth, with hill and valley crown'd,
From out thy bosom rose,
And winding round her came to view
Thy beauteous arch of blue;
There Morn's first waking from repose,
And Evening on her starry throne,
Crown'd with her golden sunset shone,
Glass'd in the lucid folds of thy transparent zone.

Deep walking in thy watery caves
The Moon doth bright appear;
Amid the thunder of thy waves
She lifts her glittering spear;
When from her palace gates, through some bright cloud,
Emerges forth her presence proud,
The emerald and the chrysoprase,
Responsive own the blaze;
And finny troops flash in the burnish'd rays,
While her soft shadow roves at ease
Her watery palaces:
Thus still and soft the Church doth walk below
In the Baptismal seas,
While nought her presence soils more white than virgin snow.

Great Laver of Baptismal birth,
How didst thou in thy strength
Rejoice to know thy Lord on earth,
And His still voice to hear along thy breadth and length!

Then thou, in thy dark mood so wild,
E'en like a wayward child,
Didst hear thy Maker's voice, and sweet and mild
All calmly at His feet didst lie;
And e'en in thy tumultuous wrath
Didst make for Him a marble path;
While in their house of wood His chosen fear'd to die.

Strong flowing Main, that grow'st not old,
While all things else decay,
In youthful buoyance fresh and bold
As on thy natal day,
Thou roll'st thy watery hosts along,
And utterest thy song,
Thou keepest fresh the verdant world,
Which else would fade in her polluted ways,
In turbulence around her hurl'd,
Or soft melodious praise.

Ye watery worlds that range aloof,
Above this earthly globe,
And form your roving bands on Heaven's bright roof,
Where God hath His pavilion made[e],
And in your deeps His pillars laid,
Throwing around Him your dark-flowing robe,
In you He drops fresh life below,
In you He sets His wondrous bow!
And here below the waters move,
Responsive to some spell above,

[e] Ps. xviii. 11.

O dread mysterious awful power,
Quickening the new-born world with thy Baptismal shower!

Ye springs and fountains, stream and lake,
That fill our world below,
And bear your warrant forth to go,
A garden here on this bad world to make,
And thirst of life to slake.
Ye from the secret sea of Love,
Do spring amid the wilderness,
In varied forms ye move,
Mountain and vale with beauty dress,
And all things living bless.

Flow on, flow on, thou mighty Main,
And send thy thousand rills,
Through all thy secret stores which strain
From the dark-treasur'd hills,
And wheresoe'er thy waters flow,
The gladdening banks between,
The trees in varied order seen,
Trees of the Lord stand fresh and green
In God's own Paradise below[f].

Ye wells and waters, o'er which broods
The Dove of sacred lore,
Refreshing erst those Syrian solitudes,
While Faith still look'd before!

[f] Ps. i; civ. 16.

She now in you beholds mysterious things,
And o'er you hangs on thoughtful wings.
Ye hallow'd wells, where Abraham walk'd,
Where Patriarchs old their blessings won,
Where Jacob with his chosen talk'd,
Bequeath'd from son to son;
Till on your sacred site a greater One
Sat down at eve to rest;
'Twas He who was in Baptism manifest,
Who from His bleeding side the wave,
And living waters gave.

And thou, of all God's streams most dread and sweet,
Great Jordan, who with hallow'd feet
Down Israel's mountains didst descend,
From skies that earthward bow and bend;
From thee the twelve great stones are seen,
When Israel pass'd the floods between:
In thee the Syrian cleansing found;
From thee the Galilean lake
Spreads forth her watery bound;
O stream most blest for His dear sake
Who touch'd thy sacred wave, and hallow'd all thy ground.

The voice of the Lord is on the waters—lo, it soundeth;
He only doeth wonder,
The voice of the Lord is on the waters,—it aboundeth,
Above, around, and under,
Proclaiming the Belov'd,—the Son Belov'd proclaiming
In living thunder;

And Heaven, and Earth, and Sea, are witness to Thy naming.
The waters saw Thee, and were troubled,
And through the watery deeps the living lightnings spring;
Deep calls to deep in echoing sounds redoubled;
Go tell it forth, the Lord is King!
The Lord sits o'er the waterfloods,
And o'er the watery multitudes
His Spirit broods.

Flow forth, meek Jordan, to the sea,
Henceforth the pure salt main
Is hallow'd in its founts by thee,
And all its streams do virtue gain.
The Temple now unfolds her gates,
And healing waves thence issue forth;
And East and West and South and North
The hallow'd stream awaits.

Sea of Tiberias, watery bed,
Lay down thy rippling billow,
I fain would lay my weary head
Upon thy gentle pillow!
Bosom of waters with fair mountains crown'd,
To thee sweet memories are given,
Thou art, if such on earth be found,
A mirror meet for Heaven!
In those blest waters then
Full oft those holy Fishermen,
Watching their nets in that deep quiet scene,
Beheld the stars in the blue seas serene,

And prais'd their Lord on high.
Little they deem'd what then was nigh,
That those bright stars of lustre so divine
Were emblems of that company,
Which should hereafter rise and shine
In the Baptismal sea.

Ye watery clouds that stray above,
Ye watery streams below,
Still wheresoe'er ye stand or move,
Ye meet us as we go;—
Your sinuous paths still wending,
Upon our ways attending,
Or wings ye take and o'er our heads are flying,
Or at our feet are lying,
Stretching your silver length along.
Ye showers, ye streams, ye lakes, and seas,
Ye put on every shape to meet us on our way,
To cheer, sustain, to soothe, to please:
And when your Heaven-replenish'd urn is dry,
All things around fade and decay,
And we too pine and die.

Flow forth, ye showers, ye blissful showers,
Long parch'd hath been the land;
In sultry noon where wither'd Carmel towers,
Elijah is at hand!
He lean'd his head full low,
His head in prayer did bow,

His head between his knees.
What is there now beyond the distant seas?
Methinks I hear afar
The footsteps of the storm.
Now go, and yoke the harness'd car,
And hasten to the town;
For o'er the distant main
There is a cloud, as if a form
Were leaning with a pitcher down,
And drawing up the rain.

Spring forth from out thy mountain nest,
Thou bright and bounding billow!
Where Moses stands beside the rock,
And tented tribes through all the valley flock,
With crystal-sounding step, and sparkling breast
I hear thee down the rocky stair descending!
No green banks mark thee down the strand,
No tree, nor ranks of willow,
Are on thy winding course attending!
But famish'd beasts and thirsty men
Around thee bend, and stand,
With gaping mouth and leaning hand,
All hastening, bending, drooping, kneeling,
By thee restor'd to life again.
Meanwhile thy watery footsteps wend,
Choose their new path, spontaneous bend,
In living channels stealing,
And with their freshening song their hidden path revealing.

Ye rains on high that dwell,
Ye waters that around our home
Do ripple, fall, or swell,
And all about us gently range
With beauteous interchange,
Ye shadow forth the stores that come
From our Baptismal well,
And all around our being roam
In blessings numberless and strange.
The Heaven-built City's shadow sleeps
Within your glassy deeps,
With all her golden-pillar'd towers,
And gliding forms that walk in amaranthine bowers.

Flow on, flow on, ye glistening streams,
I listen, and I gaze,
But I have wander'd in my dreams
To Childhood's peaceful days.
While down some stony stair advancing
Your rippling waves are glancing;
Or like a silver sea are spread,
Where high-wall'd Cities see their tower-encircled head;
Or through the green elm-studded vale
Is seen to move the whitening sail,
A swelling sheet the trees between
In some Autumnal quiet scene;
Or Summer Eve is through her portals going,
And in your waters glowing,
Her fairest parting hues on you bright waves bestowing.

Flow on, flow on, old Ocean's daughters,
In every shape and form that ye are wrought,
I love you, happy waters!
Whether ye lead me back in thought
To Boyhood's purer days,
Or your refreshing sounds are brought
'Mid the polluted ways
Of cities, towers, and men.
O happy waters, hail to you again!
I know not how upon the theme I linger,
In vain I close the strain,
I strike the chords, and still again,
Thought runs on thought beneath the moving finger,
I close, and yet again upon the theme I linger.

Why are ye link'd with all my deepest musings,
And summon up the past,
Yet in regrets which evermore must last,
Your freshness new infusing?
Types of Baptismal blessings ever winding,
Ye my sad weary ways at every turn are finding,
With sounds as of celestial dew,
Or streams that come to view!
Bear me, great flowing fountains, bear me still
Upon your heaving breast;
Bear me yet onward to th' eternal hill
Where I at length may rest!
Still would I close, my tongue in closing falters,
O bear me on your flowing breast, ye happy, happy waters!

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IMAGE THE SEVENTEENTH.

Come and let us weigh them together, let us put them both in the balance, and see what it comes to.

If thou wouldest know the intrinsic value of Virtue [A], consider how she outweigheth Vice [B] and all the World, with whatsoever it hath to bestow,—of whose children it is written, that "they are deceitful upon the weights, they are altogether lighter than vanity itself." Virtue promiseth and pointeth out to thee the praise and rewards of God: Vice, the chains of slavery and punishment, for he that doeth sin is the slave of sin. Virtue healeth and strengtheneth the powers of the soul: Vice woundeth with a triple weapon,—in thought, understanding, and will,—and destroyeth. Give heed to the Occasions [C] of each, embrace the handle of Virtue and avoid that of Sin; for it is Occasion that leadeth thee to every Virtue, or every Vice, and being bald behind cannot be seized when once she is past. Be careful lest thou thyself be "weighed in the balance and found wanting." For God hath "ordered all things in measure and number and weight;" and will bring all things unto the balance, and every work into judgment. Consider how all Virtue [D] leadeth thee on, as by the hand; and maketh thee light and winged towards Heavenly things, as in the case of voluntary Poverty [E], and helpeth thee forward on the strait way that leadeth unto Salvation [F]. But Sin [G] draweth away from the road to Heaven; and the World [H] and the love of the world and of riches urgeth thee through crooked paths; and so burdeneth thee as to render thy step as slow as that of the tortoise. What therefore? beyond all things let the reflection be ever brought before thy mind, for what end thou wast created [I], and that in order to attain that end, Virtue and all things that appertain unto her can alone aid and promote thee. "Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss."

The Balances of the Sanctuary.

This is the calm of the Autumnal Eve,
O beautiful and blessed sight
Which lifts the soul to Heaven, and while I grieve
Doth fill me with a holy still delight!
O silence and repose,
Which o'er the passing year, ere yet it goes,
A holy mantle throws,
The Nightingale to other lands hath flown,
The singing birds are still,
The roses have all ceased, the lilies gone,
Declining Noon withdraws from vale and hill,
And leaves us all alone.

For these outgoings of the waning Year,
And comings on of silent night
Do put more brightly on the Heaven's apparelling,
And e'en Decay doth beauty wear.
Blest auguries fill thought and sense and sight.
From purple-clouded strands
A Spirit fair doth spring,
And on the mountain height,
Equipp'd for new and fairer lands,
Like some bright-harness'd Angel doth appear.

The yellow leaves are trembling,
And pilgrim-birds assembling,
And the silver stars are breaking,
And the Moon upon the glorious Heavens all freshly is awaking.
Now Death and Life encountering meet,
And 'tween th' opposing bands
Decay and Beauty have shook hands;
Twilight steals on with dewy feet;
While Earth and Skies are meeting
In mutual benison,
Soft-handed Silence near stands looking calmly on,
And cordial is the greeting.

Brightly looks forth the wandering Moon
On rear of the Autumnal noon;
And seems descending from a heavenly door,
And speaking of a happier shore,
When Death's dim shade shall on us fall,
And Night display her spangled pall.
The Day that goes away
Lifts up a glorious curtain in the soul
From things that are more beautiful than Day:
But we, pent up in prison-house of clay,
See them not, though around us still they roll;
Till Darkness shews the peopled Infinite,
And earth-worms tremble at the sight.

Thou aged man that sittest by the sea,
Feeding thy thoughts upon the dark-blue Ocean,

And on thy staff with pensive eyes dost lean,
Say, from that distant land, which none hath seen,
What visions come to thee,
From o'er the dark blue caves of ceaseless motion,
Say, what does thy prophetic soul divine,
To fill with happy thoughts thy lustrous eyne?
Sitting alone upon life's evening shore,
Thou hear'st th' eternal billows roar,
Already at the door.
Lift up thy heart, thou aged man,
To where thy face is set—that beauteous dome,—
There thy true birthright scan,
And measure thine own glorious home.

From the cloud-moulded visions of the West
A spirit fair unfolds her glowing vest,
And there, pavilion'd in gold-braided cloud,
Upon the sea descending,
She unto earth, in beauty bow'd,
Her dreadful scale is bending.
Balanc'd upon the Heavenly roof,
One scale springs light as air aloof,—
Sin with her short-liv'd pleasures,
Her poison'd darts, her wounds, and chains,
Bought by eternal pains:—
One low descends all massy proof,—
Virtue, with her undying treasures,
Her pains that pass away,
And joys that ever stay.

Mute is the calm autumnal eve profound,
With holy peace diffus'd around,
While all the worth of man, and his pursuit she measures.

And now as in some isle afar,
Beneath the Evening star,
Brought into nearness in the distant mass
Bright moon-lit shadows pass;
Catching the rays, as light around them flows,
While mantling Night upon their heels is treading,
And Twilight all behind her dewy sails is spreading;
They pass into their bright and calm repose,
Before th' eternal door shall ever close.
Virtue's fair daughters, born from dying woes
Of Him that walk'd the wave,
They go to Him, and plead His power to save
From the devouring grave.

And who is yonder man?
Himself a fleeting span,
His shadow lengthens as the sun goes down,
So growing Sorrow marks him for her own;
But o'er his head a golden crown
The parting sun hath thrown.
His worldly wealth on earth forsaking,
Wing'd sides he finds, and light-wing'd feet,
And on his way his comrades is o'ertaking,
While Virtue now descends her pilgrim true to meet,
And lead him hand in hand to her enduring seat.

Man seems to climb a mountain side,
And ever as he mounts to leave behind
Green spots and flowers,
And shade of verdant bowers:
Bidding adieu to golden prime,
He flings aside to envious Time
The richer thoughts that were to hope allied,
From barren to more barren still to climb.
Then, as he upward mounts, upon the wind
He hears no more the streamlet's melodies,
And childhood's freshness on his spirit dies.
But now that he hath gain'd the mountain height,
He seems to walk upon the glorious skies:
The Sun, that sets upon the seas beyond,
Flings back the radiance of his golden wand;
And clothes him with a new celestial light;
Anon he seems more large than man's estate,
A figure seen on Heaven's bright-burnish'd gate.

Another road extends its forward march,
Above the mighty arch
That stretches o'er the tide,
And one is travelling with a tortoise by his side.
How slowly doth he wend,
Making the world his friend!
Nor with her his strong league will break,
But perish for her sake,
At the celestial gate
Knocking too late!

A road still lower now extends,
Which to that glory dimly tends;
And one in sight of the eternal walls
For ever falls,—
By sin enthrall'd when near his journey's end,
And fiends afar in the dark shade rejoice
To see his hapless choice.

And lo, I see on the left hand
The forms that lead the victim soul
To chambers of the grave, and sorrow's land.
Catching the rays, they sport awhile
And on their victim smile.
One blindly tears life's charter'd scroll,
And tramples on the sword;
Another bears th' inebriating bowl,
Or whate'er price they need who sell the Lord.
While Folly laughs to gain the heart and head
Of them who dream of life, while they embrace the dead.

Occasions, standing on each side,
Present themselves to guide,
As pursuivants to either band,
Like sisters twain, or shadows bland,
With head behind, all bald and bare,
Before all flowing hair,
Through which is scarce discern'd their visage rare.
They come at every tide,
To convoy each to her own strand.
One grasps the world within her hand,

One tramples 'neath her feet.
One bears the crown of life for ever young,
And endless Heaven upon an hour-glass hung.
The other bears the thong
Which follows on the wrong:
She comes an Angel fair,
With sweet enticing air,
Her hook and scourge conceals,
And feet which turn to talons strong;
But when embrac'd, her twisted thong reveals,
And her uplifted soundless scourge,
With which her victim blind she on to death shall urge.

Hail, visions strange, which fill the poet's dream,
And shape his flowing theme
With shadows true of mightier things!
While evening skies and earth together teem
With beauteous shades that walk abroad,
Truth peoples fancy's airy road
With her own deep imaginings.
It is a hallowed and a solemn time,
As o'er the sea the red-orb'd sun descends,
Methinks I hear the sound of that eternal chime,
When Judgment shall begin, and trial ends.

Then say what hour through the long year is found
Like this, when summer's glare and daylight fails,
And Contemplation broods around,
To witness those eternal scales
Where life o'er death prevails,—

The scales as seen in Angels' eyes,
Who watch us choose our destinies?
What scene more meet, than where the stars
Stern witnesses appear,
As darkness lifts her massy bars,
And Ocean sounds his diapason drear
To the fast-waning year?

Then lift thy voice, thou glorious Sea,
In expectation trembling,
And Earth with thousand tongues,
And Stars that are assembling
With sweet though silent songs;
Lift up on high your prison-bars,
That the eternal Year may go forth, free
From all that now his vision mars,
Crown'd with immortal jubilee,
And rescued from his wrongs.

Ye feather'd pilgrims, when the year grows old,
Who on the dim horizon darkly flock,
While pillar'd clouds like smoke the vision mock,
Or range along the pented roof,
In companies so stiff and cold,—
In flying troops now wheel aloof,
Now huddle 'neath the frosty eaves,
As if in you the spirit grieves
To see the Autumn's waning leaves;
And yet, preparing to depart to-morrow,
Seem reconcil'd to this day's sorrow;

Pictures ye seem of suffering,
As if our climate did you wrong,
Yet suffering still in hope, are fresh and strong,
With buoyant wing and twittering song;
Give to my heart your song and wing,
And I with you will fly and sing.

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IMAGE THE EIGHTEENTH.

The virgins that bear her company shall be brought unto Thee, and shall enter into the King's palace.

None of those graces and virtues which thou needest—which come forth from God, and lead thee up to God—canst thou attain without prayer. For all thy wishes are in vain unless God be with thee. Pray therefore for that virtue which thou needest; first and above all things pray through the Passion of Christ [A] and trample Sin under thy foot [B]. And when thou hast prayed for strength, then seize some Occasion [C] of practising that Virtue,—earnestly asking God for the attainment of it [D]. For "unto which of the Saints canst thou turn [E]?" "the Heavens are not clean in His sight," and even "His Angels He chargeth with folly." Pray thou fervently, as one who is at the point of death [F], or situated in the greatest danger. Pray for Faith [G], for Hope [H], for Charity [I], for Humility [K], for Liberality [L], for Chastity [M], for Temperance [N], for Meekness [O], for Diligence [P]. And ever mindful of Divine charity pray thou also for the whole Church [Q], for thy Parents and Superiors [R], pray for those under thee, as David did, and for those committed to thy charge [S]; for thy Benefactors [T]; for thine Enemies [V]; for Sinners, that they may be converted [W]. In all things remember that gracious promise, "if any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, and it shall be given him:" and even greater than his "whosoever asketh, receiveth." All those Graces which have been set before thee thou mayest attain for thyself by prayer: and if thou attainest these Graces of God, then will thy prayers also be more availing both for thyself and others.

The Daughters of the Heavenly Sion.

I.

Ye of that glorious train that walk on high,
Each in the radiance of her glowing sheen,
High pursuivants that tend upon your Queen,
Strangers of earth, and children of the sky,
Where do ye haste, and one by one pass by;—
While clouds of earth beneath your feet are seen,
And as ye walk betray your heavenly mien?
Daughters of light, may I to you draw nigh?
Stay, stay, till love your beauteous forms hath scann'd;
What are your names? from what unearthly land,
Come ye to sight? and tell me, is it given
For child of earth to join your glorious band?
Forth as ye rise th' enshrouding mists are driven,
And open, as ye pass, your march to Heaven.

II.

Chief of the beauteous band, there come to view
Three sisters, which above their fellows shine,
Towering in grace and majesty divine:
In order first, in lineament, and hue,
Faith, to her Royal standard ever true,
Leading on high their bright and order'd line,
And raising with firm hand her Master's sign,
Around her thrown a stole of heavenly blue,
The Cross her sceptre, and her robe the sky.
Hope too is there with Heaven-communing face,
Fair Hope, her silver anchor fix'd on high:—
And saffron-robed descending Charity,
With little children in her loved embrace,
Leaning from Heaven with Heaven-inviting grace.

III.

Then one intent doth in a mirror gaze,
Herself to scan, the first-born Child of love,
O'er whom for ever broods th' eternal Dove,
Humility. Next in the sun-bright blaze
Free-handed Bounty; where her footstep strays
Spring verdant hues around, and flowers that move
Their thankful heads; her treasure is above;
And therefore doth she shrink from earthly praise,
Friend of the poor. The next no form of earth;—
The palm adorns her hand, the crown her brow;
She hides the stamp of her Angelic birth,
And men on earth her beauty cannot know;
But unto her 'tis given her God to see,
Making earth Heaven, Seraphic Chastity.

IV.

Then, waited on by musings pure and good,
She, who to Daniel deathless bloom hath given,
Fair in king's courts, and fair in courts of Heaven,
Bright Abstinence, who feeds on angel's food.
Next Christ-like Meekness, with her holy wood,
And ever pointing to the Crucified,
With milk-white lamb that follows by her side.
Last, in that sky-descended sisterhood,
With whip, and spur, and glass that wanes apace,
Bidding thee seize at once the hour of grace,
Comes onward urging duteous Diligence:
For hurrying fast among the things of sense,
That beauteous troop, on wings of Night and Day,
Shall pass into the clouds for aye away.

V.

Daughters of Heaven, in language all your own
Ye seem in silent attitude to preach;
And stand beyond our billows on the beach!
Fair as Heaven's doors, which, made of varied stone,
Yet mingling form one glory all their own;
Sisters of glorious birth, though varied each,
Each lovely, yet your mien, and form, and speech,
Mark all one family, all blend in one,
Their hues combining in one light divine.
Thus in my musings all together shine
In one harmonious whole, and ever seem
Passing from form to form, as in a dream,
Till all is lost in one, in beauty seen,
Centred in light, one Heaven-descended Queen.

VI.

As in that ancient, venerable pile
Of tombs and shrines, bosom'd in the ravine,
Far from the world by sea and mountain scene,
Where, as 'tis said, at dead of night erewhile
There are perceived through dim and shadowy aisle
Aerial motions as of forms unseen,
And sounds of sweetest music heard between:
Dear fancies, which th' o'erflowing heart beguile!
E'en so by you the air is stilly trod,
Bearing some happy soul to be with God,
'Mid mortal relics sad and shrines Divine;
And while my eyes and hands to you incline,
Ye seem to pass into ethereal strains,
Or one calm form, beck'ning to Heaven, remains.

VII.

Faith, Hope, or Love, whate'er thine earthly name,
Coming from place of thy transcendent birth
To fit for heaven the denizens of earth,
Whatever shape thou wearest, still the same;—
The aspiration of one lofty aim,
Stilling the noise of passion and of mirth,
Set on her heritage of endless worth,
And her immortal birth-right bent to claim;—
Art thou the handmaid, Heaven-transforming power,
Or thou thyself the Bride, so rich thy dower?
Thou hauntest me, like some night-wandering dream,
Dreams are more near to Heaven than waking theme:
May I unblamed clothe thee with mortal form,
All animate with life, with beauty warm?

VIII.

Like that celestial Beatrice that led
Florence's bard through bowers of Paradise,
Opening, like rosy petals, all the skies:
E'en thus the tranquil effluence o'er thee shed
Lighteth me on, the living 'mong the dead,
The heavenly 'mid the earthly, gives me eyes
Of glad philosophy, which Heaven descries
In things below, of thee in all doth read,
Bearing thine image pictured in the heart,
In all beholds thine eyes and hears thee speak.
Thus, though to tell of thee language is weak,
Yet all things to my spirit find a tongue,
Events and sights all range and take their part,
Syllabling words which unto love belong.

IX.

To what shall I compare the varying bloom
That lights thy face, while my fond thoughts pursue?
Like the majestic sea which comes to view,
Closing the valley of my mountain home,
A living mirror which the Heavens illume,
For ever beauteous and for ever new,
And ever changing its ethereal hue,
While passing gleams light up the purple gloom.
Thus through the night, in wakeful thought or dream,
While I behold thy beauteous countenance,
Expression varies still each speaking glance;
And when thy smile breaks forth, like some bright gleam,
I seem to hear thy voice, O music sweet,
And sit a holy pilgrim at thy feet.

X.

Bless'd be the day when first on thee I gaz'd,
For it hath op'd new worlds of happy thought,
When upon thee I muse, and musing-fraught
Tend on thy presence, when thy lustre blaz'd,
And full on me thy pensive eyes were rais'd!
For those sweet nets, that have my spirit caught,
Have purified my soul, and nearer brought
Him Who alone without all blame is prais'd,
Him Who hath made thee, and Who keepeth thee,
And watcheth o'er thee, unto Him I pray,
And when aught dark my sinking fancy shrouds,
Thou seemest some good Angel, from the clouds
Beck'ning me on to where is no decay,
But the good bloom with immortality.

XI.

Since first mine eyes beheld thy matchless grace,
And unimagin'd beauty, passing far
All thy report, and like a lovely star
Seen through a cloud, through that majestic face,
And air and speech and action, from its place
Look'd out a gracious spirit;—it doth haunt
My days and nights, till in a dreamy want
Cold wax my studious tasks, and wane apace
All the delights of common air and sky,
Dim grows the eye of Heaven; but I from thence
Will learn to muse of things beyond our sense,
More fair than all beheld by mortal eye;
Till from the thoughts of thee there shall go forth
A spirit fairer than the sky and earth.

XII.

For if we will forsake our own design,
And hopes that as we grasp them fade away,
Thou, Lord, wilt be to us, in this our day,
Sister, and friend, and brother; if we pine
Let it be further in Thy blissful shrine
To enter, and so entering in to pray,
Led on and on by the calm guiding ray
Sent forth from Thine own majesty Divine.
And if Thou wilt vouchsafe one pitying glance,
It shall not leave us, but its gracious light
Shall gladden the dull face of day and night,
Delights of earth and sky shall make more bright,
And all my studious tasks shall more enhance,
Which are but to behold Thy countenance.

XIII.

O sweetness e'en of anxious thoughts that leave
All their lov'd hopes within a parent's breast,
Watching that store, like some fond bird her nest;—
Like some fond bird, wont all things to retrieve,
And bear unto her home, to joy, to grieve,
To pour in song her overflowing breast,
To flit from tree to tree, and cry distress'd,—
If snakes prowl near at noon or beasts at eve,—
To watch, to stay, and far abroad to roam,
Yet know no rest till she to that return.
Sweet bird, thine heart is ever at thine home;
Thine heart and home are where thy treasure lies;
Man may of thee a holy lesson learn,
His heart, his home, his treasure in the skies.

XIV.

Prayer is omnipotence descending, when
We pray through Him who died upon the Tree,
Pray through His merits and His agony:—
The prayer of them who pray as dying men,
Who pray as they who ne'er can pray again,—
Such power is mighty to bring down the sky
With all that bright and glorious company;
Which made thus sensible to mortal ken,
Are but the spiritual deeds that go before,
Or follow after to the Judgment door.
Prayer hath the power to draw them from their sphere,
And bring them unto us in spirit near.
Oh, if those bright ones come on earth to dwell,
It is the golden age which poets tell!

XV.

It is in Prayer, as at celestial springs,
Those Virtues live, and breathe ethereal air:
Prayer brings o'er all around Angelic care;—
Prayer o'er each scene love's radiant halo flings;—
Prayer spreads o'er all we love protecting wings,
Makes all events a cloud-surmounting stair:—
Prayer eye-enlightening, soul-transforming Prayer
Hallows the Church, o'er Parents spreads, and Kings,
Bears and is borne to Heaven. The Monarch's calls
Shall round his people plant unearthly walls;
The mother's prayer, in the calm midnight hour,
Gains for her helpless child immortal dower:
And, at the altar kneeling, Christ's own poor
For worldly gifts true riches can restore.

XVI.

Thus earthly enemies are Heavenly friends,
While Persecution wings to Prayer supplies,
And Love on wings of Prayer doth seek the skies,
E'en like an Angel which to Heaven ascends.
And while the world to Hell's dark portal tends,
And ways of death in slumber seal their eyes,
Prayer may arrest their course which downward lies,
E'en like an Angel which from Heaven descends.
Yea, haply on their calm and peaceful bed
Our prayers may reach and may refresh the dead,—
Like airs of Heaven amid their bowers of rest,—
Like gales from far replete with tender sighs,
Which wake again their earthly sympathies,
And wreathe new cords that bind us with the bless'd.

XVII.

Then, calm Devotion, make me to be thine;
Array me all around with burnish'd arms,
Be in my hand a spear 'gainst worldly harms,
And on th' illumin'd head a Cross divine;
Clothe me all o'er with wings; together twine
One cord of varied graces, such as may
Lead me through this dark valley of decay,
And bear me onward to the hidden shrine.
Make me chaste, meek, bounteous and abstinent,
Humble and diligent,—that onward bent
I may attain to that prevailing might
Which prays to live, and lives to pray aright.
Such are those Graces which do walk above,
But varied forms of Faith that works by love.

XIX.

IMAGE THE NINETEENTH.

Learn where is wisdom, where is strength, where is understanding: that thou mayest know also where is length of days, and life, where is the light of the eyes and peace. Who hath found out her place? or who hath come into her treasures?

There be many who say, Who will shew us any good? Behold, He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice;—(and if by frequent examination we judge ourselves as this holy man of God [A], we shall not be judged of the Lord:)—and to love mercy, by bearing patiently the infirmities of others:—and to walk humbly with thy God,—even with thy Lord Jesus Christ Who hath come down from Heaven to be with thee [B]? To these add also frequent meditation on the Passion of Christ [C], and divine contemplation [D], with the renewal of repentance, and often partaking of the most holy Sacrament [E]. To all of which add most especially the love of God and our neighbour [F], after the example of that love which, like the Pelican in the wilderness, feedeth her young with her own life-blood, and dwelleth in solitary places. By these means thou shalt arrive at true tranquillity of mind, and that place where there is light of the eyes, and the peace which passeth all understanding: especially if in solitude of heart thou wilt by pious exercises adorn thy soul.

The Treasures of the King's Palace.

Ancient Sage, where going,
With thy glimmering light,
Where Ilissus flowing
Marvels at the sight,
Like a living dream that wanders forth at night?

Asking all he meeteth
Who will good disclose,
While the vision fleeteth,
And before him goes,
For th' undying spirit seeking sure repose.

Come thou here beholding,
In this woodland nook,
An aged man unfolding
His immortal Book,
In that silent mirror for himself to look.

And full much he needeth,
For this Book doth tell
Of a path that leadeth
To a living well,
And a place where no one but the holy dwell.

Fast life's sands are going,
Sparkling as they run,
And for ever shewing
That ere setting sun
Much he hath to do, and much to be undone.

In this quiet haven
Pondering o'er his soul,
And how much is graven
On the solemn scroll,
Which to worlds assembled Judgment shall unroll.

As his brow he raiseth,
Fix'd with pensive care,
On the Cross he gazeth
Drinking comfort there,
And his sins recounting mourns in silent prayer.

Peace to him be given!
Let us leave him now,
To his hopes of Heaven;—
We must farther go
Where the woodland glen is opening from below.

Where the gleam reposes
In the quiet glade,
And a Church discloses
Its calm hallow'd shade,
Pastoral haunts among, meet for musing made.

Using not abusing
Gifts set by his side,
He in solemn musing
Walks with Him that died,
And in prayers and almsdeeds seeks his Heavenly guide.

Oft he, at each turning,
On the rocky road
Knows, the Cross discerning,
Where the Saints have trod,
And the narrow path that leadeth to his God.

Oft from mirth and sorrow,
And the scenes of men,
Here he turns to borrow
That calm peace again,
Fixing on the Cross his undisturbed ken.

Then shall Contemplation
To her haunts remove,
To her airy station
Troubled scenes above,
Till the world's vain shadows less his spirit move.

Then bright hopes are given,
Taste of holier things,
And he seems to Heaven
Borne on Angel's wings,
Like a bird we see not in the cloud that sings.

Come, my tale ascending,
Greater things have birth—
Human thoughts transcending
As the skies the earth,—
Lend thine ear to hear of things of endless worth.

For this feeble mortal
Eats Angelic food;
Oh, in that dread portal
Let no thought intrude;—
'Tis all unspeakable, awful, holy, good!

Hush, my soul, thou singest
Things that are too high,
To rude ears thou bringest
Secrets of the sky,
Pass the things of God in holy silence by.

If thy heart engages
Knowledge yet more wise,
Than the chief of sages
Brought down from the skies,
Read this hallow'd emblem with thine heart and eyes;

Lo, that bird that dwelleth,
In the wilderness,
And, as fable telleth,
With no vain caress
Doth her famish'd offspring to her bosom press.

Nor shall they to-morrow
Make her lesson vain,
Nor forget her sorrow
Born and rear'd in vain,
But with their own life-blood others shall sustain.

Lo, in this man readeth
Mother's love divine,
Which from Heaven proceedeth,—
In each heart its shrine,—
Of th' Almighty's love the universal sign.

Mother's love, first, purest,
Which doth never tire,
Love which last endurest,
Heaven-descended fire,
Kindling every hearth, yet multiplied entire!

Happy he that passeth
Through this world of pain,
With a soul that glasseth,
Free from earthly stain,
Love of God—for ever in his heart to reign.

Happy he, when sadness
Chance and change are o'er,
And earth's sighing gladness
Wrings the heart no more,
Who shall see where Love lights up th' eternal shore.

Who would hoard earth's treasure
When he Heaven may gain?
Who would love vain pleasure,
When he may attain
Joys at God's right hand for ever free from pain?

Who would covet glory
Here the dead among,
Or renown in story,
When th' Archangel's tongue
Might pronounce his praises endless years along?

Here, where death must sever,
Who would lean on love,
When he may for ever
Have his God above,
Infinitely deeper than his thought can prove?

Love is like the Ocean,
Ever fresh and strong,
Birth and life and motion,
Speed and strength and song,
Which the world surrounding keeps it green and young.

Love is ever flowing,
Flowing ever down;
Love through all lands going,
From the Heavenly throne,
God's eternal city doth with gladness crown.

Come, thou soul that sinkest
On the desert plain,
Here of streams thou drinkest,
Ne'er to thirst again,
Which shall to thy resting feet and soul sustain.

Love on earth that grieveth
Tears of pain and shame,
God in Heaven receiveth
Covering it from blame
With th' enfolding mantle of th' Almighty Name.

Love for ever singeth,
Borne on glad desire,
And the blue deep wingeth,
Like a plume of fire,
As to Heaven it soareth higher still and higher.

Love for ever sinketh,
In his silent hour,
And of sorrow drinketh,
Like a dew-weigh'd flower,
As to earth it boweth lower still and lower.

Love for ever sigheth
Banish'd from his God,
Still his spirit trieth
On the path He trod,
Still with hope undying cherisheth His rod.

Love his longings weaneth
From the things of sight,
And for ever leaneth
On immortal might,
And in spirit liveth a stern anchorite.

Waiting on what waiteth
Upon God above,
Hating that which hateth,
Loving all that love,
Moving as his spirit the great God doth move.

Love is ever praying,
Nor doth count the chime;
Love is ever weighing
Heaven and Hell with Time,
Nor by casuist's measure notes and numbers crime.

And when this earth faileth
Love is strong as death,
Yea, o'er death prevaileth;
Love like vital breath
Freed from fleshly chains the spirit cherisheth.

XX.

IMAGE THE TWENTIETH.

Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps.

Observe, O Christian, what illustrious examples of faith and holiness the good Spirit and Christ thy Lord hath set before thee in the sacred Scriptures [A]. In order that Virtue [B] and her ways may not be an offence unto thee, behold, how thy Lord hath gone before thee in all instances of goodness [C]. Imitate then and copy Him [D], and endeavour to follow after Him, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith. "See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." Look to Christ as set before thee on the mount of His Passion [E]. Hear Him also teaching thee on the mount of the Beatitudes [F], and observe how in all things which He has commanded us to do He hath Himself set before us the same in His own living example. Behold, and consider that Virtue [G] which He there pointeth out, and hear His high and gracious injunction, when He biddeth us to be perfect even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect. Hear also God the Father from Heaven [H], on that other mount of His Transfiguration, commanding us to hear His Son. Finally, flee from Sin [I], which would turn thee away from following Christ, and lead thee from the difficult road of the Cross, which is the only way of Virtue, and tempt thee to thine own destruction. "For every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed." Thus, shrinking from that rough dealing with ourselves which Virtue requires, or from a love of some momentary pleasure which is found in Sin, he falls away from the path of Salvation, and from Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The Pattern shewed in the Mount.

O BLESSED picture, let my soul conceive,
And grave Thee on the tablet of my thought;
Wipe out all other records, there to leave
Thee only on my inmost spirit wrought.

O let my anxious heart in Thee find rest,
I know that all things else shall pass away,
Like nightly dreams that haunt th' unquiet breast,
Which flee like shadows at the face of Day.

I know Thou hast descended from above
To teach us what alone is great and good,
I know that all things in the end shall prove
As in Thine own example they have stood.

For can it be that He who made the skies
Knows not the value of all things below?
That He sees not aright who made the eyes,—
That He who gives all knowledge doth not know?

Yea, sure I am while we ourselves molest
Where schemes of gain or seeming good abound;
What Thou hast blessed shall indeed be blest,
What Thou hast called good shall so be found.

I see Thee on that great and dreadful morn
Bowed with the weight of Thine own charity,
While nigh o'erwhelm'd with weakness, pain, and scorn,
Thou sayest unto all men "follow Me."

O painful lesson, written in Thy blood,
To follow Thee! O lesson full of pain!
And yet not painful if it is most good,
The pain shall pass away, the good remain.

For all things Thou hast bidden us to do
In Thine own life and dying were portrayed,
In Thine own image found in likeness true,
In colours of Thy woe all living made.

The words Thou spakest on that Teacher's hill
Thou writest here Thyself in Thine own blood,
Opening our eyes to know both good and ill;
This is the mount of Thy beatitude.

For if it blessed is on earth to mourn,
Bless'd to be merciful, in spirit poor,
To love our enemies and suffer scorn,
Thou art Thyself most blessed evermore.

What is the lesson Thou from Heaven hast brought?
That seeming ills on earth which mortals fear
In eyes that are in Heaven are all as nought,
And, did we know them rightly, should be dear:

That all things chosen by the Lord of light
Are the best gifts that are to mortals given,
For all things are as they are in His sight,
His Cross to man is the sole door of Heaven.

Seek we for rays of comfort from above?
Through the dark valley cheerless was Thy road,
And the withdrawing of Thy Father's love
Like a black thunder-cloud on Thee abode.

Think we in sorrow of ourselves alone?
Upon Thy foes were turn'd Thy pitying eyes,
Thy thoughts were e'en in suffering not Thine own,
Thine arms outstretch'd in dying charities.

Shrink we from penury and hard estate?
Thou hadst but one poor mantle at Thy death,
And that the soldiers, mocking Thy sad fate,
Had made their own before Thy parting breath.

Seek we for pomp and greatness of renown?
Man's glory in that mirror we may scan,
When Pilate led Thee forth with bleeding crown,
And said to gazing crowds, "Behold the Man!"

Behold the man of sorrow and of shame,
One deem'd unworthy upon earth to dwell,
"A worm" and "outcast" among men His name,
In God's and Angels' sight "Immanuel."

Seek we in praise of multitudes to stand?
Blood-stain'd Barabbas was to Thee preferr'd.
Seek we to shine unblamed on either hand?
Loud were false tongues, but Thy voice was not heard.

Seek we soft beds to sleep on or to die?
With iron nails upon Thy torturing bed
Thy naked limbs were viewed in agony—
And Mockery stood by Thy dying head.

Thus when we meet Thee at the City's gate
And seek to enter, Thou dost bid us turn
Unto the Mount of Sorrows, there to wait
Till we ourselves and Thee shall better learn.

Alas, how full the road of toil and pain
From earthly Salem to the Heavenly hill!
Each one thereon doth his own Cross sustain,
Some weight, whate'er it be, of human ill:—

A Cross of gold, of silver, or of wood,
Or of mean straw, hid in each shape of life
Some trial working for eternal good,
Found in the outward state or inward strife.

Something to wean the soul from things of sense,
To higher aim the weak resolve to brace,
To train our thoughts in lowly penitence,
And bring us to the Cross, the Fount of Grace.

Blest woe to Thee that brings us, woe Divine,
Which quicken'd by Thee may the will control,
Or through affection mark one living line
Of Thy celestial image on the soul.

For to approach Thee must be good indeed
Although most painful: in Thy deepest woes
Healing and virtue from Thy skirts proceed,
And in thy sorest anguish sure repose.

O let me rub mine eyes, O take away
Whate'er of passion weighs mine eyelids down,
That I may see the light of endless Day,
And something from Thy sorrows make mine own!

This is the place, O Lord, where I would dwell,
And this is all the wisdom which I need,
To judge of all things and their issue tell;
This is the light where I would all things read.

Not on the Mount with those most favour'd three
Might I approach Thee, but I here may hide,—
Three tabernacles make, that Thou with me
In body soul and spirit may'st abide.

More blest than Mount of Thy beatitudes,
Or that dread Mount of Thy transforming change;
This is that Sion's hill whence healing floods
Through the world's wilderness with blessings range.

"Be perfect as your Father is in Heaven,"
So spake the Son; from courts of Seraphim
A Voice responsive through the cloud was given,
"This is My Son belovèd, hear ye Him."

Before assembled worlds that He hath made
Th' Almighty Father from His bosom brings
Th' Almighty Son, in pain and shame arrayed,
In suffering bowed 'neath all created things.

And unto lost mankind He calls aloud,—
"Ye who become not as this little child
Shall enter not with Him the living cloud,
Children of Heaven, in mercy reconciled."

"Let us in Our own image make mankind,"
So spake the Almighty Father, to His will
The Son submissively His head inclined,
And took our form that He might that fulfil;—

And answer'd meekly, "It is finished!"
So we must bear the Cross, and one by one
With Thee on earth be number'd with the dead,
And rise in life like Thee the living Son.

The Alpha and Omega, First and Last,
Slain ere foundations of the world were laid,
And on the Cross ere heaven and earth be past,
Gathering Thy children 'neath its hallow'd shade.

Ye vain deluding vanities depart,
Be still ye tumults of the impassion'd mind:
Let lowly Reverence hold the silent heart,
That God may in His temple entrance find.

Idols of pride, tables of merchandize,
Depart ye hence without the temple gate:
Let little children sing His welcome praise,
The lowly thoughts that on His Coming wait!

Loud are the sounds on all sides which would call
My spirit from Thee, all the clamorous brood
Of hopes and fears which the vain heart enthrall,
And touch the spirit in her solitude.

Alas, I must divest and cast aside
All that in me is mine—I must forego
My very self, that with me may abide
Thy Spirit, and may teach me Thee to know.

O let me touch Thy garment, vile and mean,
But full of healing, full of holiness;—
Alas, love we in splendour to be seen
Rather than meanness Thou hast deign'd to bless?

E'en as Thine own mean garment, so didst Thou
Wrap all around Thee painful poverty;
Thy ministers were Sorrows; on Thy brow
Was set the brand of bitter infamy,—

E'en as a kingly Crown: Thy sceptre mild
Was but the meek endurance of all wrong,
That reed of mockery; while like a child
Thou conquered'st Thy foemen great and strong.

Still as I gaze on Thee my tears will swell,
The things of which I glory drop away,
Nothing but of my sorrows would I tell,
So many are my sins, so short my day.

O let me not, for this my harden'd heart,
Be yielded up, like false-soul'd Caiaphas;
With Judas or Barabbas take my part,
Or with the multitudes that mocking pass.

Oh, let me here abide my short-lived days,
And hide me! from myself I fain would flee;
To go hence to the world and seek its praise
Is to shake hands with that which murder'd Thee.

Let me think o'er Thy sayings,—on them dwell,
And fathom in each word the depths divine,
Drinking the sweetness from the Rocky cell,
And hide me in Thee as a hallowed shrine.

Infinite sweetness, wisdom infinite
Dwells in the words Thy sacred lips have told,
E'en like the stars that fill the Heaven at night,
Exhaustless, fresh, and beauteous as of old.

Yea, all Thy words disclose themselves a Heaven,
Full of great meanings, growing as we gaze,
Stars one by one come forth, until 'tis given
To see the skies alive with shining rays.

Nay stars to us are dead however bright,
Thy words are very life, by them we live,
Our food, and vital air, and Heaven-born light,
Which to our souls bloom, strength, and beauty give.

The Painter labours with his toilsome art
To paint Thee in the colours of the sky,
Rifles all nature, borrows from the heart,—
To deck and hallow some blest sanctuary.

Art and its work shall perish, fast each hue
From the unwilling canvass fades away,
The outward form alone it brings to view,
Which must be chang'd to everlasting Day.

Faith paints Thine image on the soul in love
With Heavenly graces like unfading dyes,
To have a place in temples hid above,
And gains her colours from the unseen skies.

In Thine own Word by Thy good Spirit wrought
We see the portrait of Thy dying pains,
Thence to our souls by that good Spirit brought
Something of Thee th' obedient heart attains.

O blessed picture, on Thee let me gaze,
In Thee my weary spirit finds repose,
My spirit flies from men's polluted ways,
And drinks of sad refreshing at Thy woes.

If I believe this is th' eternal light,
The light that changes not, and cannot wane,
Then all things, as departs this life's short night,
Appear as Thou hast said, and so remain.

XXI

IMAGE THE TWENTY-FIRST.

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

Believe thou and firmly apprehend that God [A] is present in every place, and that with His eyes [B], which are ten thousand times brighter than the Sun, He beholdeth and searcheth thy reins and thine heart, and watcheth all thy ways. He seeth our perilous straits [C], and our temptations [D], in order that He may assist us. He considereth the festive revellers [E], who here receive their good things,—and the penitents [F], who here bewail the evil things they have committed, in order that He may reward them,—and the wicked [G], in order that, sooner or later, He may punish them. "The Lord's seat is in Heaven," but "His eyes consider the poor and His eyelids try the children of men." Set Him therefore always before thee, whether thou art engaged in traffic [H], or art eating and drinking. If thou art playing [I], yet let it be as in His sight. Walk thou with Him [K]; and remember above all things that He is present in thine heart [L]: manage as with Him all thy affairs: choose thy state of life [M] as according to His will, attending therein also to the inclination of thine own nature, for this also is from God. Remember that from Him is all spiritual authority [N], and all temporal power [O]. It is God that worketh all in all, and reacheth from end to end, and strongly and sweetly disposeth all things according to the greatness of His power, His wisdom, and His goodness.

The Eyes which are in every Place.

(*A Hermit's Cell.*)

As here removed from the resorts of men
I converse hold with silent solitude,
From contemplation's tower I view mankind,
Like insects building citadels in sand,
And learn communion with a better world.
  These pensive walls, that shut out day's glad eye,
Open the eye of Heaven, and make the soul
Luminous at each door to let in light,
Bringing to that dread stillness where God is,
With eyes innumerable in every place,
Ten thousand times more bright than midday suns.
The more I ponder I am lost the more,
Our feeble eyesight blinded with the glare,
As step by step, by contemplation led,
We nearer draw unto the Fount of light;
Yet drawing near more distant still we seem,
Like that famed sage of old who ask'd a day
To say what God is, then another sought,
Another and another, seeming still
More distant from the thought that he would grasp,

In infinite progression, more and more
Lost in bewilderings of his pensive mind.
But yet not so, to musings void and vain,
Do we in meditation wander on,
Lost in the labyrinth of Heathen doubt,
We who are given to know in Christ the door,
His Cross the key, which opes of human things
The intricate, involved, and numerous wards,
Whereby we know indeed that God is love.
Unspeakable prerogative! for so
Our contemplations are no longer sad,
But link by link in sweetness carried on
Above this earth, nay rather on their wings
Bearing this earth to Heaven, until at length
Beneath the grosser steps of our weak thought
The golden stair by meditation rear'd
Gives way;—We look around us, and awake,
As from some solemn music of the soul,
To stern realities of this sad life.
Come, blessed musing, ever nearer come!
Be my companion; at thy blissful face
Let me gaze on! Come, ever dwell with me,
Divine philosophy! like some sweet chime
Taking possession of my inmost soul
Tune the rude jars of life! be these deep thoughts
My sole realities and life the dream,
Till the fast fleeting shadows of the world
Shall sadden and affright the soul no more.
What are the eyes of God? O fearful thought,

That fills all contemplation! eyes of sense
He gives to man, and ears whereby our thoughts
Pass to each other, sense to apprehend,
And memory to retain;—mysterious powers
Whereby we wrap each other and ourselves
With knowledge, like ethereal light around,
Pervading, entering in each other's hearts.
But what are these His gifts, how poor to speak
Those infinite perfections, which we call
The eyes and ears and thoughts which are in God;—
His eyelids which behold the sons of men,
Present in every place? Thought feeds on this
Till lost in adoration.

How replete
With inspiration, wonder, awe, delight,
The presence here of man with man below:—
The subject in his King's own countenance,
The child with the fond parent, friend with friend,
Or lover in the sight of one beloved!
Our spirits from each other take their hues,
Fast as the seas from the o'erhanging skies.
Highest of all things which we know below
The eye of man, powerful to minister
Hope, or correction, reverence, or support;
Yea, e'en wild beasts 'tis said will stand aghast,
And madness at the stern-fix'd eye of man
Grows mild, enchain'd with intellectual bands.
How sweet whatever channels may convey
Feelings of present nearness, or may bear

Intercommunion of responsive thought,
Converse of eye or tongue, or written words,
Or silent interchange of mind with mind!
Such drops, that mingle sweetness in life's cup,
Are but the shadows and the semblances
Of that dread consummation, when the soul
At all her avenues and every pore
Shall come to know the countenance of God.
Buoy'd with the theme on tiptoe stands bright Hope;
"Open," she cries, "ye everlasting doors,
Rend, skies o'er-head, your circumambient veils,
Which hide from us the presence of our God,
And haste, ye wheels of the eternal Morn;"—
But Fear draws back aghast in reverend awe
Lest we be ever blasted by the sight,
And asks of Faith, if she will give to know
The feeling of His nearness here beneath,
Through eyes and ears school'd to discern our God,
Whose countenance protection is and peace.
'Tis not the speculation of rude thought
That has that key of Heaven, but Prayer alone;
Prayer through the avenues of this dark world
Leads us thus blind with an ethereal thread,
Makes conscious of His guidance, gives to feel
His nearness which alone is life below.
We ask for Him around, and find Him not—
We ask of all His creatures ranging by,
And all His works, if they have seen His face;
They answer, We are form'd and live by Him,

But we behold Him not and know Him not.
We ask of nature, if she hath in her
That which can satisfy the craving soul:
But to our search she giveth no reply.
We ask the Sea with his abyss of waves,
He answers, It is written, that His paths
Are in the mighty waters, but His ways
Are secret, and His footsteps are not known.
We ask the winds and all the habitants
That wing the buoyant air: we ask the Skies,
The Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and they respond
Of His dread goings we have heard the sound,
But He is not in us, nor can we speak
His dwelling-place; we range our order'd watch
Without the flaming walls that hide His courts.
It is reveal'd that in the heart of man
Is set the throne of Him that dwells in Heaven;
The Body is His Temple, and the Soul
His inner shrine; then reverend must we think,
And speak of Him in stillness, for where'er
The heart of man may be there is his God,
Conversing with him in his silent thought,
Judging, controuling, guiding, reigning there.
And therefore 'mid the troubles that surround
To know Thee is to know all blessedness,
And is to be at peace! who dwells in love
Doth dwell in Thee, for Thou art Love Divine;
Thou art around us though we see Thee not,
About our path, about our bed, and Thou

Spiest out all our ways; whom then on earth,
And whom have I in Heaven, but Thee alone?
Around us and within us, as the child
Wrapp'd in the mother's womb and there sustain'd;
Or as the gem transfused with radiant light,
Or cavern'd spunge with the surrounding sea;
Or as the air filling the bird's wing'd frame,
Making it buoyant; or as vital heat
Keeping its watch against chill-creeping death;
E'en so around and in us is our God.
And souls made pure and radiant by His grace,
Are spiritual mirrors to reflect Himself,
E'en as the sea reflects the face of Heaven.
But here, alas, as turbulent rude streams
Image no more the quiet eye of Day,
E'en so the stir of rude impassion'd strife
Ruffles men's spirits, till they less and less
Bear in themselves Heaven's kind protecting eye.
In love alone is light, in love is life,
For love still ever yearns the soul of man,
In love alone finds rest; and He alone
Who made her is meet object for her love,
Which turns from all things else unsatisfied,
Wishing to ope itself unto His beams
And His deep-searching Eye. Therefore whate'er
Lurks in the heart of man, and fain would hide
From that His eye of soul-transforming power,
Against Him shuts the door, and leaves that place
A corner full of night, where poisonous things

Crawl, breed, and stable, hiding from the day.
Still at Night's door He knocks, the Morning Star,
And when denied due entrance, oft in sounds
Of stern adversity His voice is heard
Calling his friend, like Lazarus, from the tomb,—
The tomb of low delights and groveling thoughts;
His grave-clothes, which He bids him to unloose,
And sets with Him at feasts in Bethany,
The house of His obedience. Such His calls
And gracious visitations of the good,
Calming this earthly noise to hear His voice,
Nurturing the soul to thrilling reverence
As brought more near to Godhead; mercy's beams
Kindling the soul to an habitual awe.

How strength'ning, how subduing, yet how calm
The feeling of His presence! 'Mid the loud
And busy scenes of this tumultuous life
He walks in stillness unapproachable,
In this our world of spirits watching souls,
As we ourselves may watch the things of sense.
How green and stirring is this wilderness!
'Tis like a natural temple clustering round;—
Her over-branching columns put forth life,
Her roof is musical with singing birds,
The air with buzzing insects, and the floor
Alive with creeping things and opening flowers.
Man notes them all with intellectual eyes,
And walks amid them unobserv'd, while they
Unconscious of His presence sport around.

So are we all within the eyes of God,
Who walks among us while we know Him not,
In this His temple, wherein spirits live,
Impervious to the sight or dimly seen!
Sweet thoughts of all-pervading Providence,
In the hot hour of our adversity
Flowing so freely, and which come as sounds
Of rippling streams heard beneath scorching suns,
When we retire to leafy bowers apart
For contemplation, solitude, and shade,
And listen, and are griev'd to find them end.
Sweet thoughts of God, in themes of high discourse
Flowing to Paradise from whence they rose,
While, like the stones that break the streamlet's flow,
E'en doubts and difficulties give rise to themes
Which still renew them to melodious sounds,
With eddyings bright, careering as they go—
And in the bottom shine like Eden's gems
With precious stones, which interrupt its course.
So are our musings still'd to holy peace,
And awful meditation; dear to Him
His creatures as the apple of His eye;
And we are all alike within His sight,
Whether in doing or in suffering wrong;
This takes the sting from biting injuries
And calumny; and turns what else were hate
To pity; and hath oft upborne the soul
To walk with happy angels o'er the cloud.
For let but Faith uplift the sensual veil,

And shew us here below, how eyes of God,
Innumerable and brighter than the sun,
Behold the thoughts and ways and lives of men,
And what a flood of Heaven-born light doth bathe
The scenes of life! With this o'erwhelming thought
The good man grows familiar, till at times,
When State and Greatness seem on him to wait,
He would put on the lowest garb of men,
And hide himself in his own littleness.
How terrible are seen the crimes of men
Glass'd in God's judgments, in that mirror seen
They speak His presence: how replete with awe
His power and majesty, as dimly seen
By loyal and by filial piety
In His Vicegerents: or when these full oft
Offended by men's crimes He sets aside,
Himself in them despised, and He Himself
Stands in their place, and His last judgment sends,
The last precursor of their final doom,
Blinded infatuation. It is He
Visits in love the lonely penitent,
In his dim cell with fast and vigil bound,
And sends him angel guests: and it is He
'Mid the close tempter's wiles who sheltering stands.
Mysterious visitations! dread to think
That those His eyes which visit sons of men
Pass through eternity[a], with the dread orb
Of knowledge infinite encompass'd round:—
All scenes of life, with all the ways of men,

[a] See Image XXI. letters F and G.

Are with their endless portions in His sight;—
The murderer's lifted hand pursuing life,—
The festive voices loud at banquetings,—
The many speeches of the busy mart
Rolling their merchandize, and crowded ports;
And sportive games, when the loose villager
Weaves 'neath the moon his rustic saraband,
Or tunes alone his pensive madrigal
Unto the Evening star, whose watchtower gleams
Between the branches of the village oak.
To know His presence is to steep our hearts
In the irradiance of a Heavenly fire:
The knowledge of His presence here in man
Crowns every action; and round meanest things
Weaves rays of glory; it is this which makes
Each calling honorable; while all in place
As kingly servants stand, for His behests
And ministrations. 'Tis no heathen chance,
But His good Angel marks each road of life,
Assigns the line, the chisel, or the spade,
Giving to each his destin'd heritage;—
The Crown to Kings, to Bishops sacred charge.
As when we look on meanest things around,
While some sweet pipe attunes the soul's deep ear,
The music clothes those sights with radiant gleams,
And lights them as with sunshine, so the thought
Of God clothes all things of this mortal life.

Lead me, good Angel, to those holier haunts
Where He unfolds His presence more Divine,

To sacred temples, and to inner shrines,
And consecrated altars: there to learn
How in that heart of hearts He builds His shrine,
Which is in contrite meekness bow'd to earth,
While awful thoughts like holy ministers
Own his dread nearness, and before Him bow
In adoration! These more near and near
The soul shall to His presence-chambers lead,
Where Seraphin and Cherubin, who stand
Before Him, with ecstatic fear and love
Are ravish'd, yet who veil their feet and eyes
Because they love Him not and fear Him not,
As He is worthy of their fear and love.
To know Thee is on earth all blessedness,
And is to be at peace with God and man!
Nor need we wings of the transporting dove
To bear our restless souls to be with Thee
In th' Heaven of Heavens; for Thou art with us here;
Love shall give dove-like wings of Prayer and Alms
To bear the soul to Thee her place of rest.
Meanwhile 'mid stormy tumults of the world
The Ark of Thine own presence gathers home
Thy children, and protects them o'er the wave.
Here in this wilderness and lonely scene
This silence is not solitude, if God
And His good Angels will approach more near,
And calm the soul their influence to know.
From sights and sounds of the deluding world
The senses here turn inward on the soul,

And so the ear and eye may be in Heaven,
Communing with th' unearthly melodies
Which tune the heart to wisdom. Oh, how calm
Is the dread stillness of the silent grave,
And thoughts of them that people it! which seems
A figure of that peace which is with God,
And they which enter into it have found;—
A quiet haven after stormy seas,—
A night which opes the stars when day is still.

K
I
B
C
A
Illuminabit abscondita tenebrarum et manifestabit consilia cordium
G
E
F
D
H

IMAGE THE TWENTY-SECOND.

God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

O the terrible sight of Judgment! Behold, O man, and consider what then thou wilt wish to have done: do that now, and love Virtue [A], which will then alone be thine advocate, when God *will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the heart* [B]. The good things thou hast done thy good Angel shall then recount [C], but the devil also before God and the whole world shall accuse thee of thy sins [D]. Oh, how will the wicked man then wish to be united with the good [E]. O the sad separation [F]! O the mournful spectacle! Here the world which mortals make so much account of is burned up [G]. There Kings and Princes are trembling [H]. Here will be past the irrevocable sentence either of eternal punishment [I], or of eternal glory [K]. If thou wilt ever keep in mind these the last things, surely thou wilt never willingly be guilty of any sin. For it is written that "we must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad:" and moreover "that every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment."

The Day of Days,

OR

The Great Manifestation.

Solemn are th' Autumnal signs
When the waning year declines,
And the frequent meteor shines:

Deeper tokens shall appear
When the winter shall be near
Bringing in the Eternal Year.

Heavily through land and main
Moans the dread prelusive strain
Of the rising hurricane:

But more terrible the tone
When Creation's self shall groan
As there comes the Judgment-throne.

Solemn is th' autumnal pall
When the leaves in silence fall
Through the branching forest hall:

Darker gloom shall clothe the sky,
As that Season draweth nigh
When the stars shall fall from high.

When the sun is in eclipse,
Terror sits upon men's lips,
Till his light the forest tips:

Deeper fear through hearts shall run,
When the dim expiring sun
Says that his long work is done.

When the palsied earth doth shake,
When terrestrial thunders wake,
Sons of men with terror quake:

Then shall universal space,
From its height unto its base
Say the Judge doth leave His place.

Watchful wakes the eye and ear,
When the glowing Eastern sphere
Doth proclaim the Sun is near:

Hope and Fear shall listening stand,
When the moving sea and land
Shall proclaim the Judge at hand.

Midnight terror wakes from sleep,
When the mountain thunders leap
Like a stag from steep to steep:

Louder far the trump of doom
Shall re-echo through the gloom,
And declare the Judgment come.

Marvellous and passing strange
From dead midnight is the change
When the mid-day sun doth range:

But more wonderful the sight
When the everlasting light
Breaks upon this earthly night.

Wondrous is the gate of Even,
When through all the dark-blue Heaven
To our sight the stars are given:

But more solemn shall it be,
When around us we shall see
The celestial company.

Sun and stars withdrew their light[a],
When the locust cloud of blight
Shrouded Israel's land in night:

More ten thousand-fold the state
On the Judge's path shall wait
When He opes the Eastern gate.

When the dead Thy voice did hear,
In the grave and in the bier,
All aghast stood solemn Fear:

Then shall be a deeper dread,
When all ages of the Dead
Hear Thee in their darksome bed.

Oft we feel the dye is cast,
And a long expectance past,
And the Hour is come at last:

So in silence of the tomb
In a moment shall have come
The expected Day of doom.

Solemn is the trial, when
Man doth give account to men,
Solemn is the trial then:

[a] Joel ii. 10, &c.

That account shall be more drear,
Greater trembling shall appear,
When the Judgment shall be near.

Dread on earth is the assize
When we watch the Judge's eyes,
Till we see how sentence lies:

Greater awe shall hold the breath,
When we wait to hear of death
Which for ever perisheth.

Awful is the silent room
When a brother is call'd home,
And we feel his hour hath come:

Greater awe shall then be known,
When we see the Judge's throne,
And the sentence is our own.

Awful is the lightning blast,
When suspense doth stand aghast,
Ere the thunder follows fast:

Deeper shall be stillness when
Judgment summons one from men,
And we wait the Voice again.

Solemn thought within us breeds
When a multitude of heads
Like a sea around us spreads:

What shall be through earth and sky,
When the Angels from on high
And all men are standing by?

Wonder doth the heart appal,
When we witness first of all
Ocean, mountain, water-fall:

Greater awe the heart shall bow,
When it first shall ope to know
God Himself come down below.

In the peopled concourse now,
Lo, before the rich man's brow
To the earth the poor doth bow!

See crown-sculptur'd tombs disclose,
And the crownless King arose,
But the poor before him goes.

Thought more grievous have we none,
Than that things which we have done
Should be brought to see the sun:

But what terror shall be then
When the thoughts of guilty men
Stand before the Judge's ken!

Now oft deed and word and thought
Pass away and go for naught,
Scarce before the conscience brought:

But they all shall then be found
Writ in adamantine ground,
And shall like a trumpet sound.

Now when conscience stands at bay,
From the look that strikes dismay
We can turn our eyes away:

But His face we then must brook,
When the Judge shall on us look,
And shall ope the dreaded book.

Conscience oft doth drop the rein,
Oft so fast her slumber's chain,
Not e'en death can burst in twain:

But the trumpet echoing deep
Shall so wake her watch to keep
That she ne'er again shall sleep.

Sin doth bring a gradual gloom,
Till she makes the soul a tomb,
Which no warning can illume:

But the all-pervading sight
Of the Judge's presence bright
Shall her senses steep with light.

Sudden in the crowded street
All past guilt our thoughts will meet,
Writ as in a lightning sheet:

Haply so in that appeal
Shall one flash of light reveal
All the bosom doth conceal!

When we feel us cold and drear
We have now some friendly ear
To alleviate our fear:

Who a pitying ear will bend
If the Judge be not our friend
In our everlasting end?

Great below a glorious name
When the sounding voice of fame
Doth to men man's deeds proclaim:

Greater glory shall belong
Unto him whose right or wrong
Is upon the Archangel's tongue.

Sweet, as soft melodious lays,
When the light of other's praise
Bathes our steps with sunny rays:

But if God should praise bestow
Who alone the heart can know,
What to this is praise below?

Dread the calm when shipwreck o'er
Sounds of fear are heard no more,
And the sailor is on shore:

But, O thought surpassing speech,
When the soul wakes on the beach
Which no tempest more can reach!

Dreadful is the joy, I trow,
When a mother from her woe
Wakes her first-born child to know:

Greater joy succeeds the pain,
When the soul shall life attain,
Never more to die again.

Thought comes like a sighing blast,
When it says our hour hath pass'd,
And our crown to earth is cast:

But such thought is weak to tell
If we wake and have to dwell
In a doom unspeakable.

Awful is the passing moan
Of a spirit left alone,
When it mourns occasions gone:

But more sad and desolate
If we waken all too late,
And are found without the gate.

Hearts almost to bursting swell
When they faintly syllable
To the dying sad farewell:

Sadder his adieu shall be
Who the loved—the bless'd—shall see
Parting for eternity.

Touching sad is music known,
When a deep heart-thrilling tone
Brings around us loved ones gone:

Sadder shall be that sweet sound,
If it breathes their path around
Who have left us prison-bound.

Here when men together band,
And against each other stand,
Awful things are then at hand:

But no question now of right,
When these pass into the light,
Those to everduring night.

'Tis on earth the thing most dread
When Corruption makes her bed
In the body of the dead:

Thus to us hath Love brought nigh
Semblance of the mystery
When the soul herself shall die.

If we have but eyes and ears
All Creation living stirs
Into speaking characters,

And to us would fain reveal
Things, which silence now doth seal,
Of that day without appeal.

Day of days, the first and last,
When shall sound the echoing blast,
And Creation stand aghast:

When the volume shall be spread,
And the writing shall be read,
Which shall judge the quick and dead!

Day of days! that day of fear,
It is written shall appear
Ere we think it will be here.

Day of days, the day of doom,
When indeed wilt thou have come
On our bed or on our tomb?

Day of days, the awful day,
Christ Himself hath bid us pray
That thou wilt not long delay.

Day of days, though long it seem,
It shall come before we deem,
When all else shall be a dream.

Sudden as on that old world
Vengeance erst the deluge hurl'd,
And her watery flag unfurl'd.

Sudden as on Sodom's walls
When the fiery judgment falls
And surprise lost guilt appals.

Sudden as at midnight shone
Flaming doom, pronounced and done,
On the halls of Babylon.

Sudden as at midnight deep
By dark death arous'd from sleep
Guilty Egypt woke to weep.

So Remorse shall wake too late
When with everlasting fate
Judgment shall unbar the gate.

When is heard the midnight cry
Of the Bridegroom's coming nigh,
And the Virgins slumbering lie.

When the King shall standing near
At the marriage-feast appear,
Girded with o'erwhelming fear.

Oft Suspense hath look'd before
Watching for some opening door,
Then she finds that all is o'er:

When we feel in very deed
Hath arrived the hour of need,
And a trembling doth succeed.

In an instant from the ground
We shall hear the trumpet sound,
And in Judgment shall be found:

In a way no man can deem,
Nor an Angel reach the theme,—
Sudden as the lightning's gleam.

Then the Cross shall lift its head,
And the stars before it fled
Shall in darkness make their bed.

Day and Night on either hand
Shall in silence take their stand,
Waiting for the new command.

When the Maker of the whole
Shall the Earth and Heaven uproll,
Folding like a finish'd scroll.

When the hideous prince of air
And the blackness and the glare
Speak the pit of lone despair.

When the Church released from wrongs,
On her Heavenward archway throngs,
Crown'd with everlasting songs.

When their task for ever done,
Earth gone by, and glory won,
Saints shall pass into the Sun.

As our thoughts the theme pursue
Still the portrait comes to view,
But how feeble to the true!

Lord, in this Thy mercy's day,
Ere it pass for aye away,
On our knees we fall and pray.

Holy Jesu, grant me tears,
Fill me with heart-searching fears,
Ere that awful doom appears.

Supplication on us pour,
Let us now knock at the door,
Ere it close for evermore.

By Thy night of agony,
By Thy supplicating cry,
By Thy willingness to die,

By Thy tears of bitter woe
For Jerusalem below,
Let us not Thy love forego.

'Neath Thy wings let us have place,
Lest we lose this day of grace,
Ere we shall behold Thy face.

Love of God shall stand alone,
And that love it shall be known,
By the deeds that we have done.

XXIII.

IMAGE THE TWENTY-THIRD.

As a drop of water unto the sea, and a grabelstone in comparison of the sand; so are a thousand years to the days of eternity.

Before all things consider Eternity [A], and how the Saints in Heaven and the wicked in Hell now wish that they had more earnestly followed after holiness. O how long is Eternity! Thou mayest reckon up the atoms of the sand on the shore [B], thou mayest count the drops of water in the sea [C], more easily than thou wilt number the years of Eternity. Where the Tree shall once have fallen [D], whether it be toward the South, or toward the North, there shall it for ever remain: nor beyond that will there be any more Time [E], nor Occasion [F], nor Death [G], excepting Death eternal. Behold, how even one Sin shutteth man up in Hell [H]. Oh, how much would he that is for ever lost now give, if he could purchase but one little hour [I] in which he might repent! But it is now all in vain, and he is derided by the evil spirit that deceived him [K]. Look to it therefore and take care what thou art now placing in that indelible record, and in which Eternity thou art writing [L]. For *thy thoughts, thy words, thine actions, when once past, are eternal,* and can never be again undone. O short-lived and high-destined man, who art so fast travelling to the tomb! Oh, that thou wouldest be wise, that thou wouldest be wise in time!

The Years of Eternity.

Dread stillness, when the gate of life shall close
For ever! and for ever! infinite
In immortality of dying woes,
The fathomless abyss of penal night!
Thought lifts her hands aghast, and with affright
Against the dreadful image shuts the door,
And back recoils from that dread word—*no more.*

O unimagin'd sad realities,
The adamantine wall, the burning chains,
Wherein the worm of anguish never dies,
Where nothing but the change of woe remains,
Beyond the furthest reach of earthly pains!
For ever! Hell grows darker at the fame,
And echoes from its lowest depths the name.

For ever! thousand upon thousand years,
And centuries on centuries to pile,
Ages on ages, yet no end appears,
No thought of termination to beguile;
Upon the horizon drear no gleam the while;
It fools our reckoning, like the trackless wind,
And sets imagination far behind.

Philosophy in nature saw that Hell,
A death that died not, seeing vice led on
To pain and ruin irreclaimable;
For what but this was the Sisyphian stone,
The wall of adamant, the triple zone,
The wheel that rested not, the unfill'd urn,
The streams where all must pass and none return?

For ever, let us gaze upon thy brow
And paint thee; what shall bring thy form to view,
And image thee—the never-ending now?
The sky above us can afford no clue,
The sea no colour which can give thy hue,
Earth from her stores can yield no lineament,
Which can to sense thy dreadful form present.

The awe-inspiring mountains at the thought
Upon their adamantine bases shake,
Moving away, and vanish into nought—
The brazen-vaulted skies above us break,
And fade as smoke; and ocean seems to wake,
And find him wings, and from his place to soar
Into the boundless void, and is no more.

Eternity! awhile upon the beach
We sport with painted pebbles, and we send
Our eyes and thoughts to travel to the reach
Of seas and skies, unanswer'd: we ascend
From mount to mount, and at the last we end
Where we begun; to you, earth, sea, and sky,
We call in vain to read this mystery.

Yea, could we take the mighty ocean up,
And count it drop by drop, from strand to strand,
It all were but one drop in that vast cup:
Or, could we sit and calculate the sand,
Numbering each grain of dust that forms the land;
Yet that which dwells with everlasting years
Laughs at the reckoning,—and untouch'd appears.

The door for ever closed! where'er it falls,
To south or north, the tree for ever lies,
Where in an instant close enduring walls,—
Where gain'd or lost for ever is the prize,—
Where Death himself is dead or ever dies,—
Time with his scythe lies broken and o'erthrown,
Occasion with him sleeps, her hour-glass done.

Oh then, of hours which now so fleeting pass
The sinner shall too late the loss deplore,
Put forth his hand to grasp again Time's glass,
And draw it back at that dread word—*no more*,
For stern Necessity holds fast the door:
Dread thought, and thou more dread reality,
O let us gaze on thee, nor put thee by!

For ever closed, the time of trial gone!
At thought of thee the sun itself grows pale,
The candles of the sky turn dim and wan,
The firm-set bounds of day and night do fail,
Earth's pillars pass like clouds before the gale;
Time himself flies with all the things of sight,
And hides from view in shoreless infinite.

Yea, at the thought all creatures seem to move,
Like rivers hurrying down unto the sea,
The mountains of the earth, and Heaven above,
Flowers, fruits, and living things, all seem to flee,
So mutable and fleeting, and to be
But passing images of what remains,
Shadows of that where Truth eternal reigns.

To utter that dread word *for evermore*
The mansion of the disembodied soul
Shall unbar all its caves from shore to shore ;—
The far-stretch'd Heavens, from Ganges to the Pole,
Their twice ten-thousand portals shall unroll,
And all the furthest regions of the sky
Shall utter that dread word—*eternity*.

The sun, the moon, th' immeasurable skies,
And mountains heap'd on mountains, and the sea,
Are but like stairs on which our thoughts arise
To apprehensions of infinity ;
But yet they are as nothing ; all we see
Weigh'd in the scale of our ascending thought
Are but as dust, and fade away to naught.

Ye blissful companies that sit around
Within the circle of th' eternal fence,
In Heaven's immeasurable depth profound,
Yet in no circle visible to sense,
But without centre, or circumference,
Well may ye watch and gaze with earnest eyes
On men that walk 'tween such deep destinies !

How do we hasten to the boundless vast,
E'en as the arrow speeding to the mark,
Which in one moment passing is and past,—
Or like the waning of a flickering spark,—
As hurries into port the full-wing'd bark,
Or as a shadow glancing past the door,
Irrevocably gone and seen no more.

Therefore our God doth pity us, because
Our fleetness, which we know not, He doth know,
Ere we have pass'd the gulf: life is the pause
Like fitting of the arrow to the bow
Before 'tis gone for ever: we e'en now
Shall understand what those deep words convey,
"A thousand years with Him are but a day."

It is the weight of dread eternity,
Which we do bear about us as we go,
Which though we see not God and Angels see,
That makes it meet that we should bend so low,
Walk near the ground, and to His judgments bow!
And this our being's awfulness we scan
In the sad bearing of the Son of Man.

How doth the limner and the poet's eye
Dwell on the tablet that shall ever stand,
When they would paint for immortality!
How do they glean each hue from sea and land,
And with laborious caution guide the hand!
But their eternity is but a day,
The shadow of a shade that cannot stay.

Whether we will or nay, each cherish'd thought
Is passing into marble, line by line,
And as we speak our very words are wrought
Into expression on a form Divine;
Or chains of evil on the soul entwine.
O thought of ages which can ne'er be past,
How inconceivable the dreadful vast!

How awful is that word *for evermore!*
And yet th' insatiate soul's congenial home,
Which here, as it advances to deplore
The fleetingness of all things, looks to some
Assured stability that is to come;
Sea, Moon, and Stars, and Skies which earth surround,
All speak some home, immortal, dread, profound.

Dread word *for everlasting!* Go, demand
What joy is dearest in their love's abyss,
Where happy choirs drink life at God's right hand;
'Tis that no time shall take away their bliss:
And unto them who their great prize shall miss
The bitterest drop in that most bitter cup
Is that no end their sorrows shall drink up.

For ever is the fountain which abounds,
And *never* is the bound to which it flows,
The shoreless sea of being still surrounds.
Where shall this dread reflection find repose,—
Save in that God who all our frailty knows?
In thought of Him this fearful thought finds rest,
It hath no place of refuge but His breast.

Here among things that fade so fast away,
Whatever courts our love, before it goes,
Still flatters with the hopes that it will stay:
Duration all things' value doth dispose,
The penal aggravation of all woes;
Takes worth from flowers, and gives it to the gem,
And is itself the spirit's diadem.

Around me as I write the shadows flee
Of number numberless,—leaves from the trees
Are falling,—and the showers are pouring free,—
And multitudinous on the outstretch'd seas
Waves lift their little heads unto the breeze,
And flowers are gone,—and seeds around us shed,
Seek o'er the boundless lands their wintry bed.

But more than leaves that fall into their graves,—
And more than drops of rain in winter shed,—
And more than are the multitudinous waves,
Which o'er the expanse of waters lift their head;—
And more than seeds which seek their wintry bed,
Those ages long when life and death appears,
The immortality of endless years.

We deem of termination to all space,
But yet that termination further goes,
Still Thought sets foot upon the furthest place,
And shoots beyond; that Thought no limit knows,
Beyond the end the infinite still flows:
Thus to all time no Thought can find the door,
But limitless extends—*the Evermore.*

Is this the substance, the reality,
And life the dream? then let us talk no more
Of ways to flee from hallow'd poverty,
Of gathering grains in streams of golden ore,
Of evil tongues, of disputatious lore,
Of many days the poet's praise shall live,
Of the delights domestic love can give.

For more than thoughts on anxious souls that break,—
More than the grains in fabled streams of gold,—
And more than idle words that men shall speak,—
Than joys of home,—than praise that grows not old,—
More than all these, ten thousand times twice told,
The never-ending years God shall bestow,
When spirits shall awake in bliss or woe.

This makes the eyes so full of pitying care,
That 'mid the dead and dying thus we flee,
'Mid mouldering shrines in ruin sad and fair;—
That when we die we do not cease to be,
But pass to shoreless and unchanging sea:
This, lost in sensual things, the soul divines,
Like a dim lamp that in a ruin shines.

This is the chord of mournful tenderness
In Heathen song, at every parting close
Returning, while with flowers their heads they dress,
That like those fading flowers the spirit goes
But to some unimagin'd dread repose:
Still in the soul sounds the deep underchime
Of some immeasurable boundless time.

For otherwise why thus should man deplore
To part with his short being? why thus sigh
O'er things which fade around and are no more—
While heedless of their doom they live and die,
And yield up their sweet breaths, nor reason why,—
But that within us while so fast we flee
The image dwells of God's eternity?

From tomb to tomb the living echo cries,
Th' unearthly calls of multitudes gone hence;
From tomb to tomb one lesson still replies,
Like the dread voice of God's omnipotence;—
Warning us from the fleeting scenes of sense
To turn to Thee, and ask Thee for Thy rod,
That we may be prepared to meet our God.

THE END.

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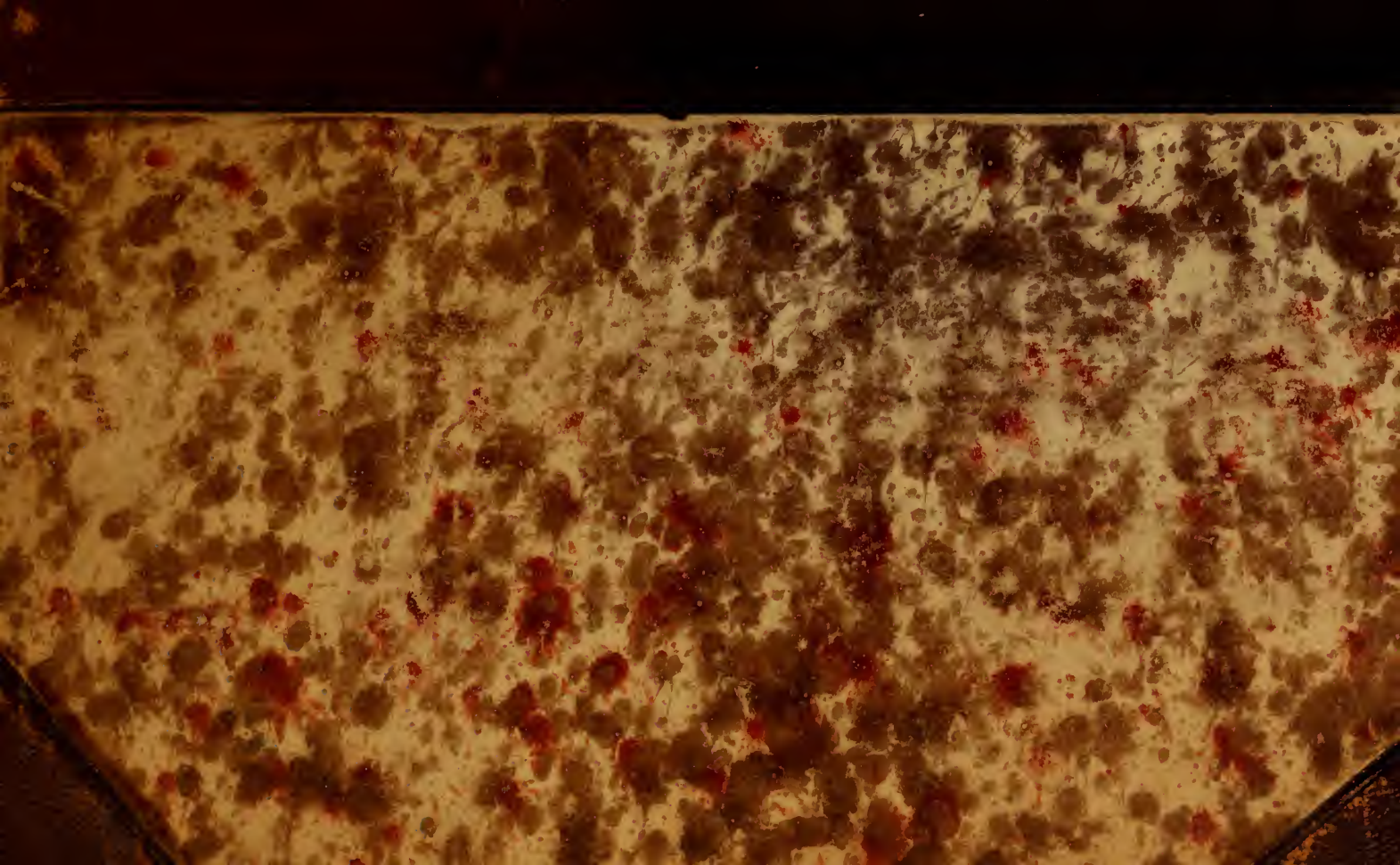
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